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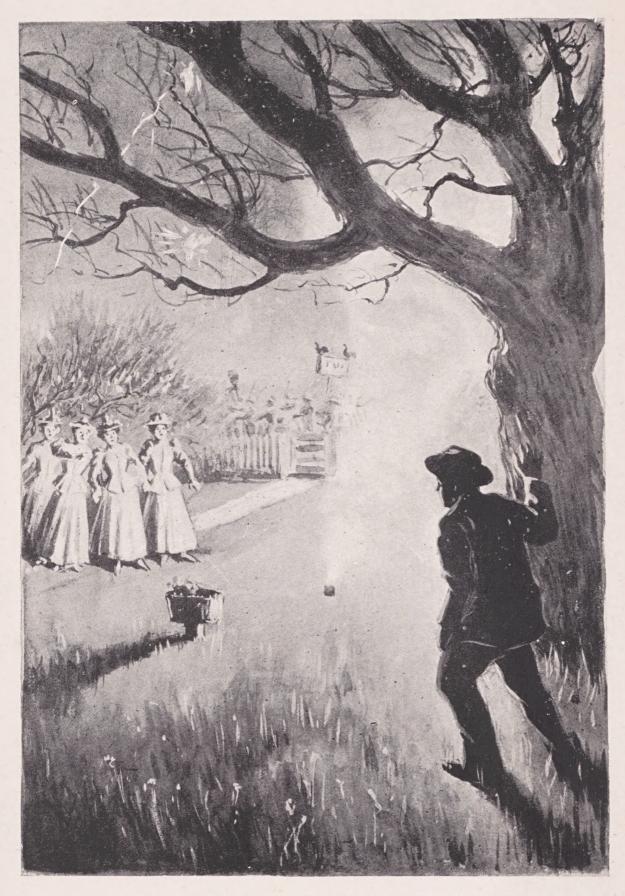
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THE DARK FIGURE UNDER THE TREE. (Page 56.)

# THE YOUNG CAPITALIST

LINNIE S. HARRIS

AUTHOR OF "BERTHA'S SUMMER BOARDERS"



BOSTON
The Dilgrim Press
BEACON STREET

PZ3, H2427 Y

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# Mother

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INTEREST HAS SPURRED ME TO

RENEWED EFFORTS

WHEN ENCOURAGEMENT WAS NEEDED

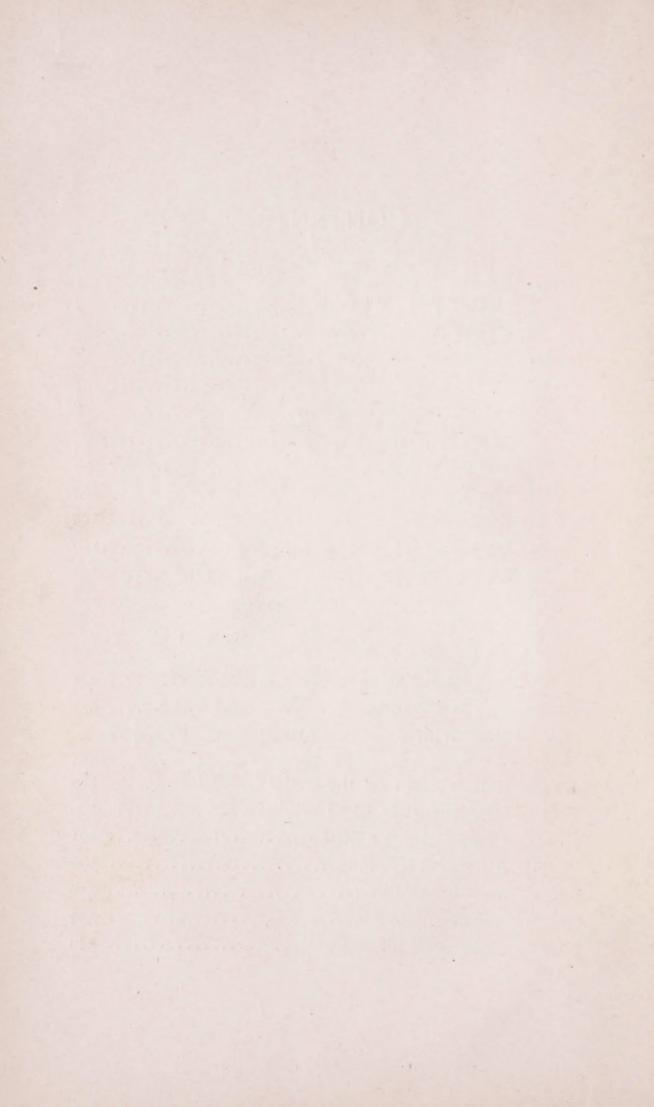
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IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



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## THE YOUNG CAPITALIST

#### CHAPTER I

### MOTHER JACKSON'S GIRLS

THE sun shone warm and bright, late one afternoon, into the south room of the old Jackson house, where a group of girls were gathered, all talking at once like a flock of chattering blackbirds.

In the room beyond, busy with her week's mending, sat Mrs. Jackson, listening to them, now with a smile, now with a sigh, and often with a troubled look on her face; for, though she only kept a boarding-house for academy scholars, "Mother Jackson," as they all called her, felt that she was in a measure responsible for the young souls under her care. Her own daughter, Nelly, was the centre of the group, and her tongue was heard the oftenest. She was curled up in the

corner of the sofa surrounded by bits of ribbon, velvet and feathers, for she was trimming her winter hat.

Maud Farnsworth had come in on her way from school, and Violet Arlington had brought down-stairs to show to the girls her new hat, gay with plumes and velvet, which had just been sent to her from home.

"How lovely!" exclaimed Maud. "That bird of paradise is awfully fashionable, and the fur round the edge is so becoming! Do try it on!"

"Oh, you put it on your head, Maud," replied Violet. "Nothing shows off well on me, but you will look like an angel in it."

"Angels do n't wear hats with cockades like that on them," laughed Nelly. "Can't you think of a better comparison than that, Violet?"

"I do n't care," declared Violet; "Miss Emerson said Maud had perfectly angelic hair."

"Yes," replied Nelly, "but the hat is n't angelic a bit."

Maud paid no attention to the discussion, but rose to survey herself in the old-fashioned mirror which hung between the front windows. She was a very pretty girl; the angelic hair, which was the palest of pale gold, curled around her white forehead in bewitching little rings; her eyes were gray, fringed with black, and had a most touching, innocent expression; her complexion was a perfect pink and white, and as she perched the hat upon her head, the girls exclaimed in chorus:

"O Maud, it is awfully becoming!"

"It is like painting the lily to adorn you, Maud," said Nelly. "You look best as you were the other night in the tableau of the 'Guardian Angel,' dressed in a loose white robe with your hair falling over your shoulders."

"But that would hardly do for a street suit," laughed Maud, handing the hat back to its rightful owner, then added as Violet went up-stairs to put it away: "That hat is overloaded with trimming, is n't it?"

"That just suits Vi," said Nelly, trying to make a bow stand erect. "You know how she dresses. The other morning when it was raining just as hard as it could pour she would wear her new furs to school."

"They must be very rich," observed Mary Sherman, who was sitting in the rocking-chair by the window.

"But it is very poor taste to put all your

money on your head so that folks can see it," declared Nelly; "but Violet wants everything on the outside."

"Hush!" said Maud, in a warning tone, "here she comes."

Some girls would have suspected that they had been talked about behind their backs, by the sudden silence marking their entering the room, but Violet Arlington was not at all sensitive and suspected nothing as she took her old seat by the table, which was littered with books and papers.

"What are you doing, Nelly?" asked Mary, to break an awkward pause.

"I am making my winter hat," she replied.

"Several years ago I bought a frame, price thirty-five cents; in the winter I cover it with velvet, and in the summer with lace; thus I have a new hat every season."

The girls all laughed, but Mrs. Jackson looked pained.

Nelly scorned a lie, and would never deliberately have told one, but unconsciously she had fallen into the habit of stretching the truth a little to make the girls laugh. She had ripped her old hat to pieces and was covering it with fresh velvet to wear to school, but her mother

had given her money that very day to get a new felt hat from the milliner's. Alas, how girls' tongues fly! If Nelly Jackson had really been obliged to cover the same frame with velvet in the winter and lace in the summer she never would have owned it before those girls, and her mother knew it.

"I do n't see how you can trim a hat, Nelly," said Effie Lamb in her quiet little voice.

"It is one of my talents," Nelly replied, "I have 'a knack at contriving,' as old Mrs. Jones says."

"You have enough there for half a dozen hats," said Maud. "Which color are you going to have it, red or brown?"

"I am going to have it red, trimmed with brown," said Nelly briskly. "This bonnet box of mother's never fails. Whenever I want anything in the millinery line I have only to turn it upside down and I am sure to find something to fit my needs."

"Where did you get so much stuff?" asked Maud.

"Oh, mother thinks that the eleventh commandment is: 'Never destroy anything.' She never threw anything away in her life. She has been saving the stuff in this bandbox ever since Noah and his family moved out of the ark. That piece of ribbon came off of my great grandmother's wedding-bonnet."

"Is n't it old-fashioned!" exclaimed Violet. "Why does Mother Jackson keep everything like that?"

"She thought it might come round in style again sometime," replied Nelly composedly.

"Do you suppose they will ever wear anything like that again?" asked Violet, holding up the piece of old-fashioned ribbon.

"Oh, yes," said Nelly promptly, "it may spring into style any minute. I dare say I shall be wearing it myself ten years from now."

"On the same frame, I suppose," said Maud, buttoning up her jacket.

"By that time I may be able to afford a new hat," said Nelly gayly.

Maud bade them good-bye, and Violet accompanied her to the door, from which in a few minutes she came flying back in great glee.

"Guess what started her off so soon." she exclaimed.

"I know," said Mary calmly, "George is coming up street. I have been watching him all

the way along. I knew the minute she caught sight of him she would start."

"She has got on her new feather boa," said Violet from her post at the window. "It is awfully becoming and she knows it. See how she sails along."

"Dear me," exclaimed Nelly, "'what fools these mortals be!' I shall have to get up and see the sight."

She gathered up her bits of millinery in her apron and joined the group by the window. The sun, sinking to rest in the southwest, shone on the little gold pin she wore, formed of the letters C. E., and caused it to sparkle as she looked out over Violet's shoulder, but none of them noticed it.

"I wrote and told mamma all about George's actions last Sunday," said Violet gleefully. "Would n't he squirm if he could see the letter?"

"Boys of George's age always do lots of foolish things," said Mary, who had reached the advanced age of twenty, while the boy in question was only eighteen.

"Mary," said Effie Lamb, "you said you would help us with our geometry."

"All right, I will," said Mary good-naturedly.

"But let us go up-stairs; we can't study here with
Nell and Vi chattering."

"'A girl who bore with grief and pain,

A volume with the dreadful name—

Geometry!"

quoted Nelly, as Mary and the two Lamb girls went up-stairs.

"I do n't like Mary Sherman a bit," said Violet, "she is so sarcastic."

"Mr. Alden says sarcasm is a dangerous weapon to play with," said Nelly gravely, regarding her hat with her head on one side. "If used judiciously it is cool and cutting, but it is apt to make people afraid of you, and that is why sarcastic people have so few friends."

"Dear me, Nell," said Violet, swinging back and forth in the rocking-chair, "did you take that down from Mr. Alden's morning lecture?"

"I remembered it, for I did not know but there might be danger of my becoming sarcastic. You know, Vi," said she impressively, "the tongue is the most unruly member of the body."

"I suppose it is," Violet replied, "but I never try to curb mine, I usually let it wag."

"Then you may become as bad as Mary in

time," said Nelly, with a warning shake of the head over the bows on her hat.

"I had rather be as bad as Mary than as meek and quiet as the little Lambs," Violet retorted.

"They are too good," said Nelly wisely. "You know one needs a spice of wickedness to be interesting."

"Then I need never worry about not being interesting," laughed Violet.

"Nor I," said Nelly, but she was more concerned about one of her bows that would not stand up properly than she was about her "interesting wickedness."

"Nelly," called her mother, "I want you to come and set the table."

Nelly frowned. She did not want to leave her millinery, but she loved her mother too well to refuse, so, bundling her work into the bandbox, she went out into the dining-room.

"Poor Nell!" thought Violet, picking up a story book, "she either has to set the table, peel the potatoes, or wash the dishes the minute she is out of school; I should think she would die."

With five boarders there was always enough to do at the Jacksons'. Mrs. Jackson was not strong,

and Nelly often called herself a brute, a wretch, and other bad names for grumbling because she had to work. Her most ambitious dream was to be able to support her mother so that she would not have to take boarders.

"Some day, mamma," she would often say, "I will be a schoolma'am; then you and I will have a cozy little home of just three rooms, and you won't have a thing to do but make our tea over an oil-stove."

Mrs. Jackson smiled at this vision of the future. It did not seem possible that her little daughter would ever be old enough to teach, though she was rapidly shooting up into a tall, slim girl, and would be seventeen her next birthday.

Mrs. Jackson possessed a treasure in her one servant. Mrs. Gibbs was what George Arlington termed a "vegetable widow." She had married a man who caused her to hate the whole race, and if Mrs. Jackson had not been a widow she would not have served her so faithfully. George, the only male representative beneath the roof, declared that he had to take it, but that was principally because he delighted in stirring up Mrs. Gibbs' wrath. And yet, though she never

spoke of him in any other terms than, "That young scamp of an Arlington," there was a soft spot in Mrs. Gibbs' heart for the boy, as was proved by the lemon pies which she made for his consumption.

Mrs. Gibbs had one disagreeable trait; she loved to sing, and often exercised her vocal organs to such an extent that Mrs. Jackson was obliged to leave the kitchen and cover both ears with her hands. She was a member of the Salvation Army, and when Nelly went out to set the table she was making dipped toast and causing the kitchen walls to echo to the refrain of one of their favorite hymns.

Nelly found enough to do, and it was nearly half-past seven when, with hat and jacket on, and her Bible under her arm, she ran into her mother's room.

Mother Jackson's room was a haven of refuge for all the young people in the house. Headaches were nursed on the old sofa between the windows, homesickness was always cured there, and when George had what he called "the glooms," or had gotten his hand split open by a baseball, he always went there for aid and comfort. Nelly called it a corner of the kingdom of heaven, and always went there for her mother's blessing before starting on any important enterprise.

"It is consecration meeting to-night, mamma," said she, running in, "please give me my verse quick, for the girls are waiting."

Mrs. Jackson looked up into the bright face. Daughters are always pretty in their mother's eyes, but Mrs. Jackson was not thinking of Nelly's rose-leaf cheeks and sparkling eyes, she was praying that she might be able to help this young soul committed to her care.

"My verse is a short one to-night," said she, "but I hope you will think it over well:—'Keep the door of my lips.'"

"O mamma!" said Nelly anxiously, "have I been saying anything very bad?"

"Do you think it is doing as you would be done by, talking over the girls' failings when they leave the room?"

"O mamma!" said Nelly eagerly, "I did n't say half as much as the others did, Maud and Violet—"

"It is not Maud and Violet you will have to answer for," interrupted her mother, "but Nelly Jackson. And one thing more; won't the girls be surprised when they see your new hat after what you told them this afternoon?"

- "They knew I was joking," said Nelly quickly.
- "Are you sure?"
- "Dear me!" sighed Nelly, "must I label my statements, 'This is a fact,' and 'This is a joke,' as the old lady marked her pies 'T. M.'t is mince,' and 'T. M. 't ain't mince'?"

Mrs. Jackson could not help smiling, but added gravely:

"We must watch and pray over these tongues of ours, for remember they are given us to glorify God with. Take your verse for a guide, and now good-night. I hope you will have a good meeting."

Nelly did not rush downstairs, clearing the last two steps with a jump, but walked slowly, and was very sober when she joined the girls.

- "What made you stay so long?" said Violet. "We shall be late, sure as the world."
- "Who is going to lead?" asked Mary, as they went down street arm in arm.
  - "Joe Allen," Effie Lamb replied.
- "Oh dear!" exclaimed Violet, "I have a good mind not to go. Why do they ask him to lead? He is so bashful he makes a horrid mess of it."

"He has to take his turn," Jessie Lamb explained.

"Such bashful boys ought not to have their turn," Violet declared.

"I always feel as though I must help him out," said Mary. "I do n't know but when he is blundering along I shall get up and take charge of the meeting myself. What do you suppose he would do in that case, girls?"

"It would n't occur to him to take a back seat."

"Poor Joe!" sighed Mary. "I do n't know how he is going to get through this world, unless he manages to scare up some spirit from some unknown source."

"Then his hands are so red," continued Violet, "and his coat-sleeves so short. Did you ever see them the right length, Nell? Why do n't you say something? Girls, what is going to happen? Nell, has n't spoken for as much as a minute!"

Nelly had been biting her lips to keep back the words which but for that little talk with her mother she would thoughtlessly have spoken. She flushed with shame as she thought of some of the things she had said about her fellow Endeavorers, simply because they sounded funny and made the girls laugh.

"Do speak, Nelly," implored Violet, "and relieve our feelings. What do you think of Joe Allen?"

"Joe can't help it if his coat-sleeves are short," said Nelly slowly, "and I do n't think we ought to make fun of a boy because he is poor and bashful."

It cost Nelly an effort to make this speech, and appear to reprove the girls.

"We must follow Nelly's example," said Mary sarcastically, "she never makes fun of any one."

"Yes, I do," said Nelly quickly; "I say horrid things, I know, but it is not right just the same."

"We 'll let poor Joe alone," said Violet. "We will be late unless we walk faster."

Nelly was glad that a few steps brought them to the vestry, and that there was no opportunity to say more on the subject.

#### CHAPTER II

#### EXETER ACADEMY

EXETER was a sleepy old town, with nothing to boast of but its academy, which stood on a hill overlooking the river. As education advanced, the free high schools somewhat diminished the number of students, but young men wishing to fit for college still availed themselves of the advantages it offered, and at the time our story opens, the school, under the charge of excellent teachers, was well regulated and prosperous.

When Nelly Jackson was a wee girl, her father, captain of a large vessel, had sailed away and had never been heard of since. As she grew older Nelly understood why her mother's hair was snow-white and her eyes had such a far-away look in them at times. When, at last, Mrs. Jackson forced herself to believe that her husband would never come back, she had opened

her house to academy boarders and filled the long silent rooms with wide-awake boys and girls.

The five beneath the old Jackson roof at the present time were entering on the second year of their course.

George and Violet Arlington were the son and daughter of the wealthy owner of some granite works in a distant part of the county. George was fitting for college, and Violet had been so lonesome when he left home she had begged for permission to accompany him. Mrs. Arlington, who had been a gay society girl, spent a month or two every winter in New York, leaving her children to the care of a housekeeper, so it was no wonder that they preferred Exeter and Mrs. Jackson's pleasant boarding-house to their own home.

Mrs. Jackson privately thought it was a good thing for the young people to be sent away from their own home, where they were indulged and spoiled until only selfishness and wilfulness could be the result. But they caused her more care and anxiety than all her other boarders, especially George, who was one of those wideawake, fun-loving boys who take life as a sort

of joke from which they must extract all the sport they can.

Mr. Alden, the principal of the academy, tried to keep an oversight of the scholars, and for this purpose distributed cards every Monday morning with blanks to be filled by the pupils. He did not require them to stay in every evening, but when they were out they were to put a mark on the card and tell him honestly where the evening was spent. Also, to be out after half-past nine they must ask special permission.

George Arlington's card always had more marks on it than any other, but when questioned Mr. Alden was pleased to see that he frankly confessed where he had been, though some of the places were questionable, for even sleepy old Exeter had its temptations to which the young were exposed.

Violet was a gay, thoughtless, heedless creature, who had grown up unchecked, but, for a wonder, was not spoiled. Nothing ever troubled Violet. If she got poor rank at the end of a quarter she scolded a little and then forgot all about it in half an hour.

A great intimacy had sprung up between the Arlingtons and Farnsworths which troubled Mrs.

Jackson. Frank and George were great chums, and Maud and Violet inseparable friends. There was nothing apparent to condemn in the brother and sister, but Mrs. Jackson fancied there was a touch of insincerity in both of them. She distrusted Maud's sweet eyes and lovely smile, and there was something about Frank, which, though she could not define it, caused her to fear he was not a fit associate for George.

Jessie and Effie Lamb, the youngest scholars in the school, were disrespectfully termed "Mary's little Lambs," by George, for the elder girl, as they all came from the same town, unconsciously assumed care of them. Mary was twenty, and the fact that she had taught one or two terms of school caused her to appear quite venerable in the eyes of the other young people.

Monday evening, after the girls had gone out, Mrs. Jackson went downstairs and found George alone in the sitting-room, in the rocking-chair before the fire.

The old south room had a cozy, homelike look with its drawn curtains and open fire. The chairs were old, but gay tidies covered the signs of age, the wall paper was faded, but the leaves of a glossy ivy hid the fact from the keen eyes of the

observer, and a stand of plants in one window, mostly in bloom, filled the air with fragrance.

George rose at once as Mrs. Jackson entered and gave her the rocking-chair.

"Why did n't you go to the Endeavor meeting, George?" asked the lady, drawing up her workbasket.

"I should have been obliged to put a mark on my card if I had gone," replied George, with an air of deep regret.

"I thought Mr. Alden gave you Sunday and Monday evenings to attend church and the Endeavor Society," said Mrs. Jackson in surprise.

"He does grant us a dispensation Monday evening," George replied; "but we have to put a mark on our cards just the same, and, you see, I like to have one night clear at the end of the week, so I do n't go."

"O George!" said Mrs. Jackson smiling, "that is a poor excuse."

"Mr. Alden thinks anything is a good excuse that will keep us in the house. Would n't he be happy if he could keep us shut up from Sunday night until Saturday! He would forgive me all my past sins if I should hand in my card without a mark on it."

"Why do n't you try it?" Mrs. Jackson suggested.

"I do n't believe I could stand it," he replied gravely; "such close confinement would undermine my system."

"Soberly, George," said Mrs. Jackson seriously, "it would be much better if you stayed in more, or, at least, were not out so late."

"A fellow does n't like to have his teacher watching over him like a granny," said the boy impatiently. "What can happen to me in this sleepy old town?"

"Even in this sleepy old town there are places I should not want a boy of mine to go to," said Mrs. Jackson quietly, "and there are young men with whom I should not want him to associate."

George's face flushed, but he replied frankly:

"I confess I did feel mean the other night playing cards at Griggs' store."

"Why, George!" exclaimed Mrs. Jackson, dropping her work, "have you been there? Why, a class of young men go there that I did not suppose you ever spoke to. Who took you there? I know you did not go alone."

"I went with one of the fellows," replied George evasively.

"One of the fellows that make a practice of going there?" she asked.

"Oh, no," he replied quickly, "we were going by and dropped in, that was all."

Mrs. Jackson could not have told why, but she suspected that Frank Farnsworth was the fellow George meant, for, though Frank appeared all right, she could not help distrusting him. She would not ask George, however, for she knew he never betrayed a friend.

"I hope you won't go there again, George," said she earnestly, "for it is not a good place. The girls will play games with you here at home any evening, and you are at liberty to ask any of your friends in whenever you want to."

"Do n't tell them I went to Griggs'," said he quickly. "They would think I was n't fit to enter the doors of Exeter Academy."

"What you tell me in confidence is sacred," said Mrs. Jackson; "but if I were you, George, I would not go to a place that I was ashamed to have the girls know about."

George flushed up for the second time, and, afraid that Mrs. Jackson would say more, he picked up a book and went to studying.

Mrs. Jackson was a wise woman, for, knowing

that she had said enough, she held her peace. The silence remained unbroken until a whistle outside caused George to lay down his book.

"Is that a signal for you, George?" asked Mrs. Jackson pleasantly.

"Yes 'm," he replied; "it is Frank. I am going out for a little while."

Mrs. Jackson sighed as the door closed behind him. George was not her son, but his mother was not there, and she felt that she must fill her place and watch over him as well as she could. She did not dream that Mrs. Arlington would not have troubled herself about where her son spent his evenings, nor worried about his companions, so long as they were well-dressed, gentlemanly fellows like Frank Farnsworth.

George had been gone but a little while when the girls returned.

"Where is George?" asked Violet. "If he does n't look out, he will be out after hours again."

"He went out a short time ago," Mrs. Jackson replied.

"With Frank Farnsworth, I suppose," said Nelly. "I do n't see how George can endure so much of that fellow's society. I can't bear even the squeak of his boots. His initials just stand for what he is—F. F., very loud."

Something in her mother's face caused Nelly to stop short and color high. Would she never learn to control her tongue! What would the girls think of the profession she had made in the meeting they had just attended, if she ran on in that unchristian spirit about Frank as soon as she reached home?

The next morning breakfast was a little later than usual, and the last bell was ringing as Nelly ran down to the street. The slamming of the gate and footsteps behind her caused her to look round to see George leisurely following.

- "I should think you had an hour to reach the academy in, at the rate you are travelling," said she.
- "I'm in no hurry," he replied. "The bell rings in five minutes. There is no need of rushing ahead like a runaway steam engine."
- "I know why you are in no hurry," declared Nellie, "you do n't want to report to Mr. Alden what time you got in last night."
- "How do you know what time it was?" he demanded.
  - "I heard you creeping upstairs during the

small hours," she replied. "I had been asleep and woke up."

"Mr. Alden had better make you night-watchman and report to him about the boarders. But it was n't in the small hours, Miss Jackson; it was only half-past eleven."

"I had had one or two naps, anyway," Nelly declared.

"Cat-naps," George retorted. "You could n't rest till you knew what time I came in. But I'm not a sneak; I'm going to report to Mr. Alden this morning," and with that he left her at the academy door.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RECITATION ROOM SEATS

WHY did n't you go to church to-night, George?" asked Violet one Sunday evening as her brother entered the south room at precisely half-past nine.

George had turned over a new leaf and not broken a rule for a week. Mr. Alden's lectures had evidently made some impression upon him, or his talk with Mrs. Jackson had done more good than that lady had dared to hope.

"I went down to the Salvation Army to hear Mrs. Gibbs exhort," he replied.

"You must have been highly edified," said Mary sarcastically.

"I was," he replied. "They had the whole orchestra, drum, tambourine and cornet. They had some good singing, I tell you. They take week-day tunes and put Sunday words to 'em, and they sound first-rate."

"Those songs that Mrs. Gibbs sings are just horrid," declared Mary.

"They are better than the dismal things they sing at church," George retorted.

"Frank was at church, where he belonged," said Violet, interrupting the dispute. "I saw Mr. Alden looking at us ever so sharp. You'll have to report to-morrow morning."

"I was at meeting," George declared. "The rules say that we must attend two religious services every Sabbath, and I have; so I'm all right."

"To-morrow morning, Mr. Alden will inquire where you were," Violet predicted; "see if he do n't."

"Nonsense," George replied, "he did n't miss me."

Effie had a slight sore throat, and had not been out for the day. She was now lying on the sofa in the corner by the fireplace.

"Let us have a sing now," proposed Nelly. "Get the Gospel Hymns off the music rack, Vi."

"Ask Mrs. Gibbs to come in and join," suggested George, at which the girls uttered a shriek of dismay.

"Mrs. Gibbs has gone to sleep," said Nelly, so let us have peace."

"She sang like a lark to-night," George declared; "she is leader of the choir, and sits up among the brass instruments.'

"What shall we sing?" asked Nelly, on the piano-stool, turning over the leaves of the hymn book.

"Let us each select one," proposed Mary, "beginning with Mother Jackson."

"I'll select one of my favorites," said she-

"Tell me the old, old story."

They all gathered around the piano, for it was one of their customs to close Sunday evening with a sing, which they all enjoyed, and which caused some of the pleasantest memories which they carried away with them from the old house.

The next morning when Nelly went into the academy she found a group of girls gathered in the window of the girl's cloak-room deep in an eager discussion of some event which had just occurred.

"O Nell!" exclaimed Maud, as she caught sight of her, "we will have to omit all our recitations to Miss Emerson this morning."

"Why?" asked Nelly in surprise.

"The funniest thing has happened!" chorused

the girls. "All the seats have disappeared from the hall and recitation room."

"Disappeared!" cried Nelly aghast. "Where?"

"That nobody knows," laughed Maud. "They are gone; that's all."

"Only think, girls," said Violet; "we can't recite in English Literature; the only class I enjoy."

"Nor algebra," added another.

"Nor Latin," chimed in Nelly. "My heart will break."

"I think it is an especial dispensation of Providence," said Maud, "for I have n't looked inside of my Cæsar since Friday morning."

"But do n't they know what has become of them?" asked Nelly, in wide-eyed amazement. "They could n't have been spirited away."

"Likely as not they were," said Violet.
"Probably they flew out of the window in the night."

"The Faculty are discussing the question now," said Mary, glancing into the school-room.

The girls left the window and went up to the desk.

"This mysterious disappearance will give me half a holiday," said Miss Emerson to them.

"Can't we have the classes without the seats?" asked Mary, who hated to lose a recitation.

"We would have to sit on the floor," laughed Violet, "and they do n't keep it clean enough for that."

Mr. Alden touched the bell, and the scholars took their places. Nothing was said until after prayers; then Mr. Alden explained the matter, and after saying that if any of the scholars knew anything about the disappearance he would be glad to see them after school, called up his classes as usual. Nothing more was said publicly, but when the girls returned at noon they found the boys taking the seats off a cart before the door.

"Do tell us about it," commanded Violet, "and not tease."

"These seats have a tale to tell," said Frank, impressively. "They have been down to the Salvation Army barracks."

"How in the world did they get there?" asked Nelly, in surprise.

"That nobody appears to know," replied Frank.

"Did you ever!" exclaimed the girls. "Who do you suppose did it?"

- "Who found out they were there?" asked Violet.
- "Your humble servant," replied Frank, taking off his cap with a flourish.
- "How came you to be so wonderfully wise?" asked Nelly bluntly.
- "I put two and two together, that is all," he replied.
- "You were n't at the Salvation Army last night," said Nelly, sharply.
- "But I know a fellow who was," he replied.

  "Do n't ask so many questions. I'm going to keep mum, for I'm not the fellow that gives away a chum."

Nelly entered the academy with a sober face. George had been at the Salvation Army the night before, and it would be just like him to play such a trick.

"Dear me!" she thought, "why can't that boy behave himself? Why need he always be up to some mischief?"

Another thing which roused her suspicions was that George was the only boy in the school who was not present at the unloading of the seats; in fact he did not make his appearance until after Mr. Alden had given the

school a little lecture and the first recitation was over.

"Have you any excuse, Arlington?" asked the teacher as George entered the room.

"No, sir," he replied frankly.

"Then I shall mark you tardy," said Mr. Alden gravely as George took his seat.

In the lecture which he had given at the opening of the session, Mr. Alden had frankly stated that he had no doubt but that some of the scholars had caused the seats to be carried down to the Salvation Army barracks for fun, and that it was both disrespectful and against the rules of the school, for no one was allowed to remove seats from the building without special permission from the trustees. Notes were forbidden, but as George took his seat Nelly could not resist the temptation of sending a twisted communication down the aisle to Violet.

"O Vi," it read, "I'm afraid George had something to do with those seats, ain't you?"

To which Violet scribbled the following reply: "Of course he did it; it is just like him."

Violet never let George's scrapes trouble her, but Nelly always worried about them, for the boy was like a brother to her, and she wanted him to be good, and, then, she knew how anxious her mother always was when he got into mischief.

After school Nelly had some errands to do down town and was just leaving the grocer's when she met George.

"I say," said he eagerly, "what did Mr. Alden have to say about those seats this afternoon? Of course he gave another lecture."

"Yes," replied Nelly, "he did. He said he supposed somebody did it for a joke, but, for his part, he thought it was a pretty poor one."

"Did n't expect him to appreciate it," chuckled George. "Do you think he has any suspicions?"

"I do n't know. He said if any of us had anything to say to him on the subject he would be glad to hear it after school."

"Oh, he did," said George indifferently.

Nelly watched him out of the corner of her eye for a moment, and then burst out: "I should think you would be ashamed of yourself, George Arlington!"

"Why, what have I done?" he asked innocently.

"You know you sent those seats down to the Salvation Army," said she severely. "You are

always doing something like that because you think it is smart, but I say it is decidedly silly."

"Have you got through?" inquired George.

"Oh, I'm not going to lecture," said Nelly, tossing her head, "for it does no good; you 'll do something just as bad by to-morrow."

"That was n't so very bad," George declared.
"I only did it for fun."

"Fun!" repeated Nelly scornfully. "It is very poor fun making sport of religion and prayer. I 'm ashamed of you, George Arlington; I did think you had a little respect for religion, but you have n't."

"Hold on, Nell," he cried, "do n't be so down on a fellow. You see," he added confidentially, "I am sorry I did it, but I did n't stop to think."

"That is the excuse you always make. Where do you suppose you will bring up if you never stop to think?"

"On the gallows, I suppose you infer," said George gloomily.

"O George!" exclaimed Nelly, "I did n't mean any such dreadful thing."

"Oh, I'm a wicked, good-for-nothing fellow," he continued, "on the downward road to destruction."

"O George, don't talk that way. You can be good if you've a mind to try."

"No, I can't," he declared, "it's too hard work. I'm all worn out with the effort I made last week. Your mother lectured me last Monday night, and I strained every nerve to behave myself; was in every night at half-past nine, and kept two evenings blank, but I lost a couple of pounds; I was weighed this morning."

"Dear me, I wonder that we girls live at all if virtue is so wearing!" said Nelly, with a sigh.

"It has n't hurt you any yet, Nell," said he consolingly, "but you will be as thin as a rail by the time you are as good as your mother."

"Oh, I do n't pretend to be good," said Nelly meekly.

"Mother Jackson does n't blow a fellow up when he gets into a scrape," George continued, "but talks to him in a kind of way which makes him feel confoundedly uncomfortable."

"You ought to be ashamed to worry her so," said Nelly severely.

"I am," he confessed; "but I'm not going to tell you how bad I feel after the way you blew me up."

"You deserve to be blown up," Nelly declared.

"I'm not going to pretend that I think your tricks are funny, but tell you the plain truth."

"You are the only girl who has lectured me," he returned. "Maud told me she thought it was a splendid joke."

Nelly made no reply except to elevate her little nose.

"Vi does n't care either," he continued; "so what is the use of your making such a fuss?"

"Maud Farnsworth is a perfect goose!" Nelly burst out. "If you should blow up the academy she would n't have any more sense than to laugh and call it a good joke. I have n't any more opinion of Maud Farnsworth than I have of that stone," kicking an inoffensive pebble out of her way.

"I'll tell her what a flattering opinion you have of her," said George. "It will prevent your having to pretend you are her friend."

Nelly stopped short in dismay. "O George!" she implored, "promise that you will not repeat a word of what I have said!"

"I thought perhaps you would like to have her know what you think of her," said he mercilessly, "so that she won't bother you with her friendship." "O George!" wailed Nelly, walking on with a dejected step, "it is my abominable tongue. I wish I had bitten it out before I spoke."

"What would be the difference?" asked George, "you would have thought it just the same."

"That would n't be so bad as speaking it," said Nelly. "I do n't see how I can help my thought. But, please, George, do n't tell her what I said."

"I'm not a tell-tale," said George with dignity, but we fellows can't help thinking a good deal, when we hear you girls run on about each other."

"I know it," sighed Nelly. "I wish I had been born dumb."

"Of course it is n't so bad as sending those seats down to the Salvation Army," George continued. "That is worse than calling all my friends names behind their backs."

"O George!" pleaded Nelly, "please stop, and I won't say another word about it."

"All right; it's a bargain. I am going to see what Mrs. Gibbs is going to give us for supper," and dodging round the corner of the house George burst into the side door which opened into the kitchen.

Mrs. Gibbs was bending over the stove concocting some dish which emitted a delightful odor. She turned round as the door opened, and a frown darkened her brow as she saw who was coming in.

"You need n't come round here," she exclaimed, "for I can't bear the sight of you."

"What have I done now?" asked George, drawing his mouth down in a grieved expression.

"You need n't look so dreadful innocent," said she severely. "The minute I heard of it, I said, "It's that young scamp of an Arlington. I hope now Mr. Alden will expel him for his wicked tricks."

"Mrs. Gibbs, you'll break my heart," said George, placing his hand over his vest pocket. "What misunderstanding has come between us?"

"You need n't try none of your monkey-shines on me," said the doubtful widow, casting a disdainful glance over her shoulder. "If you amounted to a row of pins you'd find something better to do than making fun of religion. You need n't look so innocent; you know you did it. You think it is cunning to make fun of prayer, I suppose."

George, pretending to be deeply affected, took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. "After all our years of happiness to be treated thus!" he murmured. "O woman, what evils are committed in thy name! To think that a faithful friend should listen to base slanders."

"Off with you," cried Mrs. Gibbs, turning on him, brandishing the knife with which she was attending to her cooking. "I won't have you in my kitchen with your tricks. Clear out, or not a single tart will I give you for your supper."

At this awful threat George turned and fled, stopping at the window, however, to kiss his hand and wipe his eyes before he staggered out of sight.

That evening the bell rang and Nelly went to the door.

"There is a gentleman to see you in the parlor, George," said she, coming into the south room with a queer look on her face.

George knew by her expression who the gentleman was, but made no comment as he rose and left the room.

"Poor old George," said Violet, as the door closed behind her brother, "he has got to take it now."

"It serves him right," said Mary, planting her feet firmly on the fender. "I hope Mr. Alden will give him what he deserves." What passed in the parlor that evening remained a profound secret, as Nelly said; thumbscrews could not have made George tell what his teacher said to him that night. It was soon known that George Arlington sent the seats down to the Salvation Army, but Mrs. Jackson often wondered if he carried out the joke alone. If he had an accomplice, he kept dark, and George did not betray him.

# CHAPTER IV

#### THE ELECTION

HURRAH! hurrah! Cleveland 's elected, just as I expected," and George burst into the south room late one evening, triumphantly waving his hat.

"I don't believe it," declared Nelly. "They could n't have heard so soon."

"Run right down to the telegraph office then," replied George. "The returns are coming in thick and fast, and all for Cleveland."

"I sha'n't believe it until I hear it on reliable authority," said Mary with dignity.

"The humble specimen of humanity you see before you was honored by hearing the despatches read," said George, with a low bow. "Several Republicans were there, but they stole away with drooping heads."

"You are nothing but a boy," said Mary scornfully. "They do n't take boys into their confidence."

"You are nothing but a girl," George retorted.
"I shall vote some day, but you can 't."

"What is it?" asked Violet, starting up from a nap on the sofa.

"George says Cleveland is elected," said Nelly, "but I do n't believe it."

"Is he?" cried Violet, springing from off the sofa wide awake. "Joy to the world! Is n't there something I can make a noise on? May I send off a bunch of parlor matches, Mother Jackson?"

"No," said Mrs. Jackson decidedly. "I shall not let you play with fire."

"Not a match shall you burn in Cleveland's honor in this house," Nelly declared.

"How would you have felt to have had Mr. Alden walk in while you were hearing the official reports?" Mary asked George sarcastically.

"I would have given him my sympathy," George promptly responded. "He would have known that nothing but a burning desire for the welfare of the nation would have kept me out after half past nine, for I have been a model of propriety since my last scrape; haven't I, Mother Jackson?"

"Yes, you have been a pretty good boy lately," said Mrs. Jackson with an indulgent smile.

"The nation is ruined," said Nelly dolefully, "if Cleveland is elected."

"Do n't cry, Nelly," said George soothingly.

"There, there! it was too bad she could n't have her President, so it was!" and he patted her on the head, as though consoling her for the loss of a favorite doll.

"You need n't treat me like a baby," cried Nelly. "I don't believe Cleveland is elected; you are making it up just to plague us."

"Run right down to the telegraph office if you doubt my word," said George with dignity. "Every Democrat is a liar, you think; but you will find as you grow older that there are one or two that speak the truth."

"Come, come, children," said Mrs. Jackson, "it is after eleven o'clock; you must not sit up any longer disputing over politics."

It was the evening after election, and, in spite of all rules, George had stayed out to hear the returns. For the last week politics had raged among the students of Exeter Academy, and boys and girls who a month before had hardly known the difference between Democrats and Republicans now became hot-headed politicians.

The girls were awakened the next morning by

the report of a gun under their windows. George was celebrating bright and early, but Nelly and Mary did not raise their curtains to signify that they heard, though when they opened their doors they found he had had his revenge, for a piece of crape was tied to each knob.

"Mean thing!" cried Nelly, twitching it off, he is perfectly happy because he can crow over us."

"Do n't be cross with him, Nelly," said her mother smiling. "Remember you would have crowed if it had been the other way."

But Nelly did not possess what she called an "angelic temper," and George provoked her terribly, and when he called after her: "Why is Harrison like a tree? Because he'll *leave* in the spring," she felt a strong desire to box his ears.

"I believe I hate the Republicans for not carrying the day," said she, bursting in upon the assembled girls in the cloak-room.

"Why, Nelly!" exclaimed Maud Farnsworth, "why do you care who is elected?"

"Ain't you a Republican, Maud Farnsworth?" demanded Nelly.

"Oh, I have n't any politics," said Maud smoothly: "I'm on the fence."

"How long since?" demanded Nelly. "You used to be a Republican."

"She has been on the fence since she became intimate with the Arlingtons," said Mary sarcastically.

"I would like to see the people I would change my politics for," said Nelly, hanging up her jacket with a jerk and tossing her tam-o'-shanter after it.

"Girls ought not to have anything to do with politics," said Maud in a tone of superior knowledge. "Papa says he does not like to see women mixing themselves up with affairs that do not concern them. You ought to see what George sent Frank this morning. It was a skeleton about as long as my finger with a whisky jug in its hand, and this inscription tied to it: "All there is left of the Republican Party."

But Nelly would not condescend to smile at any of Master George's jokes, and going to her desk took out her books and became suddenly studious.

There was an undertone of excitement all over the school as triumphant Democrats and downcast Republicans took their seats.

"Mr. Alden has gone into mourning! see his

black tie?" scribbled Violet on a piece of paper which she sent up to Nelly.

As soon as they were sure of victory the Democrats of Exeter, like their brethren all over the United States, began to plan a celebration. George was probably the most interested of any one in town, but one thing troubled him: he could not illuminate because he was in Republican quarters. Nelly declared that not so much as a match should be burned in Cleveland's honor on the place, but, in spite of her dreadful threats, he came in one noon with a number of candles cut into small pieces.

"What are you going to do with them?" Nelly demanded.

- "I'm going to illuminate," he declared.
- "What have you got to illuminate?" she retorted. "You do n't own a stick or a stone in Exeter that you can light up in honor of your old Cleveland."
- "I happen to rent two windows, though," he declared.
- "If you are planning to illuminate your room I'll tell you now that you can't do it," Nelly replied. "My mother owns this house, and she won't allow you to light up a single pane of glass."

"Suppose we go and ask her," proposed George. "It is no use for us to scrabble about it."

Accordingly the boy and girl rushed out in search of Mrs. Jackson, whom they found in the dining-room in the hurry of getting dinner on the table.

"Mother Jackson, can't Violet and I illuminate our rooms?" cried George.

"O mamma, you won't let him light up part of this house; will you?" implored Nelly.

Mrs. Jackson paused and looked at the young people with a smile.

"You must remember, Nelly," said she, "that George and Violet have a right to their own rooms."

"O mamma!" said Nelly dolefully.

"Hurrah!" shouted George triumphantly.

Mrs. Jackson's word was law, and Nelly knew she must submit, though it was very hard, for she was proud of the fact that the Jacksons were, and always had been, loyal Republicans.

"I won't have a light anywhere else," she declared. "It shall be as dark as midnight."

"Won't you allow us a light to see by?" her mother asked.

"No," said Nelly grimly," you'll have to sit in the dark."

The day of the celebration George spent all his leisure time putting up his candles. He and Violet had five windows between them—two in front and three on the side, and George placed a candle in each pane. As soon as supper was over he lighted up, and Violet zealously snuffed until the excitement in the streets proved too contagious for her to remain indoors, and Mrs. Jackson was obliged to come to the rescue and keep the candles burning. Nelly insisted on the lights being put out, so the house was in total darkness except the Arlingtons' windows.

The town was ablaze with burning tar barrels, large bonfires, which crackled gloriously, and flaming torches. The procession headed by the brass band started from the hall and marched through all the principal streets.

"We can go out into the yard and see them go by," said Nelly. "If we stand back among the trees they can't see us nor know that we are watching them."

Violet and Maud had gone off together the first of the evening, but the other girls, wrapped up in shawls, stood in a group together in the shadow of some lilac bushes. George's candles burned brightly, thanks to Mrs. Jackson, for he had disappeared early in the evening.

"Here they come," cried Nelly, her feet fairly dancing with excitement. "I declare, it does look rather festive if they are Democrats! I wish they would stop ringing those bells so we could hear the band."

The procession came round the corner to the inspiring air of "Marching through Georgia," while the bells rang, the cannons boomed, and the small boys tooted on horns. America cannot be happy without making a noise.

Just as the procession came opposite the house a colored light suddenly blazed up, throwing a flood of quivering green light over everything, making the yard as bright as day, and revealing the girls in a group by the lilac bushes.

- "Hurrah! hurrah!" cheered the crowd.
- "Cleveland's elected!" yelled the small boys.
- "As if we did n't know it," scolded Nelly.
  "I would like to choke those boys."
- "Better choke George," said Mary. "He deserves it; throwing a green light over us."
- "I will," declared Nelly. "The villain deserves to be hung; hiding in the shadows and touching

off his horrid old light. I hope it burned his fingers. Where is he?"

"Down by the old maple," said Mary, pointing out a shadowy figure revealed in the light of the procession.

Nelly ran with all speed toward the large tree Mary indicated, but before she reached it a dark figure jumped over the fence.

"I should think you would run away," she called after him. "If you were anything but a *Democrat*, you would be ashamed to face us again after what you have done."

"Cleveland's elected,
Just as I expected!"

was all the reply she got as George went off down the street after the procession which was now passing out of sight.

# CHAPTER V

# NELLY'S TEMPTATIONS

MAMMA told me I might invite some of the girls to spend the vacation with me, and I know she expects Nelly, so do say that she can go," coaxed Violet.

"Yes, mamma, do! do!" chimed in Nelly.
"I have n't been anywhere for a hundred years, and you might let me go that little way just for ten days."

"We'll take the best care of her," said Violet, in her turn. "We won't let her take cold, eat too much Thanksgiving dinner, nor anything."

"You can't say no, mamma," pleaded Nelly, "for my heart will break if you do."

Mrs. Jackson looked down on the two girls at her feet with a smile. Violet was on a footstool, and Nelly was kneeling beside her, both coaxing, as only girls know how to coax, that Nelly might go home with Violet and spend the vacation, which included Thanksgiving.

"I do n't see any objection—" she began, at which two pairs of arms were thrown about her neck, and she was obliged to cry for mercy to prevent being strangled.

Nelly was jubilant at the thought of going away as the others did, instead of staying at home alone, which always made vacations so stupid. Only one thing clouded her anticipations, and that was that Maud was going too, for she always came between her and Violet and gave Nelly a left-out-in-the-cold feeling. She said nothing about it, however, and to all appearances nothing marred her perfect happiness.

They were to start Friday, and Thursday evening Nelly went to her mother's room to pack her valise.

"What dresses shall I take, mamma?" she asked, down on the floor beside her extension bag.

"Three will be enough," replied Mrs. Jackson, taking some stitches in her daughter's gloves. "Your best one for Sundays and Thanksgiving, a morning-dress, and your blue serge for everyday. I will tuck in a shirt waist for a change."

"They are going to have a big party Thanks-giving," said Nelly. "I wish I had a pretty evening-dress."

"Your best dress will be all you will need," replied her mother. "I understand Violet that it is only a family party."

"I know," said Nelly, doubtfully; "but if they all dress the way Violet does my meek little gown will have to hide its diminished head."

"You must not harbor the little imp, envy, Nelly," said her mother warningly. "Your dress is both pretty and becoming."

"I know it," Nelly declared, "it is just lovely and I 'm as proud as a peacock when I get inside of it, so I 'm not going to care what Maud and Violet wear, but flatter myself that I look as well as they do."

They started on the noon train, and at five o'clock reached the station where they were to leave the cars, and found a large roomy carriage awaiting them, filled with fur robes, and driven by a stalwart young Irishman.

"How are you, Jerry?" said George, shaking hands with him. "The Democrats carried the day, did n't they?"

"Indade an' they did," said Jerry grinning.
"Ye ought to have seen the castle, sor, it was lit from cupola to cellar, and I hauled brush three days for the bonfire on the hill."

"I wish I'd been at home," said George. "I did my best to celebrate, though. I lit up my own corner."

They climbed into the carriage, and, leaving the town behind them, drove out on the country road, between fields bare and brown. The short November twilight was fading fast, and a bright clear stripe of pink along the horizon told of the coming of clear cold weather.

"Is n't this jolly?" said George. "There will be skating to-morrow if this weather holds. Plenty warm, girls?"

"Oh, yes, who would n't be under these robes?" said Nelly, in a voice of pure content.

"This is our sealskin buffalo," said Violet laughing. "When papa came home from the west, Mr. Tuffs, a funny man who works in the quarry, said the Squire had a real sealskin buffalo robe that he had shot himself."

"And that mamma had a real seal-plush cloak," added George. "See, there is the house, all lit up in honor of the prodigal son's return."

"Prodigal son!" pouted Violet. "You need n't claim all the honors. Oh, the flag is flying! Can you see it against the sky, girls?"

For a moment they saw the house, which

George and Violet so eagerly pointed out, on the summit of a high hill, with its lighted windows and the flag flying from the cupola, then they plunged into a hollow and it was lost from sight.

"You have got just fifteen minutes to get us home, Jerry," said George, taking out his watch. "If you are half a second more I shall know that you have had Patsy out all day."

Jerry grinned and drew up slightly on the reins, so that the handsome chestnut they were riding behind laid back her ears and started off on a long swinging trot, as though she understood George's words, and knew she would be disgraced if she failed to get them home on the minute.

Soon they turned into an avenue bordered with skeleton trees whose branches showed like lacework against the clear sky. On either side were fields so perfectly kept up that even now they were an olive green. The driveway wound up higher and higher, but Patsy carried them at a steady trot, for she knew that a loose box in a warm stable with a good supper awaited her, and at last they paused before the front entrance, beneath a large lamp with a reflector, which made it as light as day.

The sound of wheels had been heard, for the door stood open, revealing the long lighted hall within, and Nelly felt suddenly shy as she saw what a grand, beautiful place was George's and Violet's home. But not so Maud; the "castle," as the work-people called the Arlington place, did not awe her, and she told Jerry to bring in her valise and umbrella as though she was in the habit of ordering about a servant.

George and Violet, in the joy of being home again, had almost forgotten their guests. George had bounded up the steps into the hall where a lady, still young and pretty, only eighteen years older than the boy, was kissing him, telling him, proudly, that he had certainly grown taller during the term, while Violet, with both arms around the neck of a tall gentleman, was talking as fast as her tongue could run.

Maud and Nelly stood just inside the door, and the latter never forgot the pretty picture made by the soft lights, handsome rooms, and the group standing in the foreground; Mrs. Arlington with her soft white hand on George's shoulder looking proudly up into his face; Violet flushed and sparkling, clinging fondly to her father's arm. George was the first to remember their guests.

"Here, mamma," said he, "you have not spoken to the girls."

"I have brought Maud and Nelly, mamma," said Violet, turning to her mother, "just as you told me to." Is n't it jolly they could come!"

"But which is which?" said Mrs. Arlington, turning smilingly to the girls and holding out a hand to each. "I feel quite well acquainted with you, George and Violet have talked about you so much; but which is Maud and which Nelly?"

"Guess," proposed George.

Mrs. Arlington looked smilingly into the upturned girlish faces for a moment, and then said:

"It is not hard to tell; the fair-haired one is Maud, and the brown-haired one, Nelly."

"How did you know?" asked Nelly, while Maud smiled her prettiest smile which always "took" with her elders.

"Instinct," declared George. "I knew she would guess right. She ought to, after all she has heard about you."

"Because she knew how pretty Maud is," thought Nelly.

"Because she knew I was the prettiest," thought Maud, complacently.

"I am glad to see you both," said Mr. Arling-

ton, shaking hands cordially. "You must make yourselves at home here and have a good time."

"Supper will be ready in twenty minutes," said Mrs. Arlington, "so you will have just time enough to show your guests to their room, Violet."

Violet led the way up-stairs to a large handsome room, and Nelly felt as though she had stepped into a fairy palace, everything about her was so beautiful. The soft balmy air filling the whole house, made it feel like summer.

"Well, young man," said Mr. Arlington to his son as they gathered round the tea-table, "from the reports I have had I should imagine you had managed to have a pretty gay time this term."

"He has got into no end of scrapes, papa," said Violet, answering for her brother. "Mrs. Jackson and Mr. Alden together can't keep him straight."

"Let me see," said Mr. Arlington looking across the table, "that little girl is Mrs. Jackson's daughter; is n't she?"

"Yes, sir," Violet explained, "this is Nelly."

"If she is anything like her mother I shall be glad to make her acquaintance," said the gentleman heartily.

Nelly flushed with pleasure at this compliment

to her mother, and, from that moment, she felt a hearty liking and respect for Violet's father, which, in all the years that followed, she never lost.

Violet had told the girls to bring their skates; and the next morning they started for the pond not far from the house, which had frozen over as if for their especial benefit. In the afternoon George took them to drive with his own horse. They passed the quarry, which Nelly would have liked to have visited, but as none of the others showed any interest in it she said nothing of her desire.

Sunday morning Nelly put on her best dress of soft plaid with its pretty trimmings of silk and velvet, thinking they would drive into town to church, but breakfast was later than usual, and, with the exception of Nelly, the ladies all made their appearance in morning wrappers.

"It is so cold I can't think of going out today," said Mrs. Arlington, drawing her chair close to the open fire when breakfast was over.

"The horses will have a rest then," said her husband, unfolding his newspaper.

"What will we do?" said Violet, dolefully.
"Oh dear, I just hate Sundays!"

"You will find half-a-dozen new books in the

library," said Mrs. Arlington. "I sent and got them to amuse you girls with to-day."

"How perfectly lovely!" they cried, and all three made a rush for the library at once.

Nelly was a little disappointed, for she had counted on going to church, and thought the drive in the clear morning air would be delightful; but half-a-dozen new books would atone for everything.

"How kind and lovely of Mrs. Arlington to plan for our enjoyment!" she exclaimed.

They found the books on the library table, and Maud and Violet, each selecting one, settled down in opposite easy chairs and were soon absorbed in their contents. But Nelly was not so easily satisfied. She never read a book without her mother's consent, but as it was impossible to get that under the circumstances, it was not the reason of her hesitation. It seemed to her as though the books were not exactly fit for Sunday reading; in fact, they were not the style of book her mother got for her to read, and yet—Mrs. Arlington had selected them for Violet, and that lady must know what was fit for her daughter as well as Mrs. Jackson knew what was suitable for hers. What should she do?

Maud and Violet, deep in their books, did not heed Nelly's hesitation, as she moved about the room, wishing she could find something that she would know was fit reading for Sunday morning. Although it was called a library, there were no books in the room, except a few tucked away in a closet, which looked as though they had been purchased on railroad trains. Newspapers there were in plenty, and a few magazines, but the room looked as though it had been used principally to smoke in, to judge from the ash-trays and cigarholders scattered about. Failing to find anything else Nelly picked up one of the books and was soon as deeply absorbed as the other girls, but the question would keep returning: "Would mamma like to have me read this? Is it a fit book for Sunday?" In spite of these questions of conscience she could not bear to put it down.

The dinner-bell broke the stillness of the silent house, and, reluctantly laying down their books, the girls went out into the dining-room.

- "How do you like my books, girls?" asked Mrs. Arlington.
  - "Oh, very much," replied Maud.
- "Mine is awfully interesting," said Violet, but Nelly said nothing.

As soon as dinner was over the girls returned to the library, but as Nelly took up her book the question forced itself upon her again: "Am I doing right to read this to-day of all days?"

"There!" she thought resolutely; "I know I am doing wrong or I should n't feel so uneasy about it. I won't read another word," and pushing the book under a pile of newspapers she turned and left the room.

"Where are you going?" asked Violet, without taking her eyes off her book.

"Up-stairs to write a letter," she replied.

"It can't be wrong to talk to mamma on paper," she thought, "Oh dear! home is the best place after all."

She was just bringing her letter to a close when there came a rap, or more properly speaking, a pound, upon her door.

"What is wanted?" she asked.

"Come down and amuse me," replied a voice, "or I shall go away and hang myself. This is the longest day in the year. I tried to stir up the girls in the library but they are buried alive in their novels, and I could n't get a word out of them."

"Wait a minute and I'll be down," said Nelly, hunting for a postage-stamp.

After sealing and directing her letter Nelly went out into the hall and found George seated on the upper step of the staircase, disconsolately whistling a tune.

- "What do you want me to do?" she asked.
- "Come down-stairs and play the exciting game of Tiddledy Winks."
  - "O George! you know it is Sunday."
- "Is it? I'd forgotten. You see it is vacation and I have n't had to go to church. But we must do something to while away the time. I'll show you girls those conjuring tricks you wanted me to."
- "O George! on Sunday?" said Nelly indignantly. "You ought to be ashamed."
- "It is n't Sunday now," he declared; "the sun has set, so it is Monday."
- "You did n't keep Saturday evening," she retorted. "The Puritans did n't cut off both ends."
- "I shan't be able to keep Sunday long at this rate," sighed George; "it will wear me out. I bet I have lost two pounds to-day. Come down to the stable and get weighed, Nell."

"To-morrow morning I will, but not now."

"Well, will you come down into the parlor and sing me a hymn?" he asked meekly. "Old Hundred, Rock of Ages, or some of those lively airs."

"Yes, let us have a sing," said Nelly, starting down-stairs. "Perhaps the girls will join us."

It was growing too dark to read, so the girls laid down their books and gathered round the piano just as they were in the habit of doing at Mrs. Jackson's.

"This is nice," said Mrs. Arlington as Nelly seated herself on the music-stool. "I was goinfi to ask you to sing something. Now I am going to call for my favorites. I want Nancy Lee first."

Poor Nelly! what should she do? To play would be cowardly, but how could she refuse her hostess? Her cheeks burned as she sat motionless before the grand piano.

"Do n't you know that, Nelly?" asked Mrs. Arlington kindly.

"Oh, Nell can 't play Nancy Lee to-night, mamma," spoke up George. "We are not allowed to sing anything but hymns at Mrs. Jackson's on Sunday."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Arlington, shrugging her shapely shoulders. "I did not know she laid down such strict rules. But you are not at Mrs. Jackson's now. I will allow you to sing anything you please."

Nelly rose, and, turning to Violet, said in a low tone:

"You play to-night, Vi."

"I don't believe I can," said Violet goodnaturedly, "but I'll try.

"You want to do the way the Salvationists do, Nell," said George, "take week-day tunes and put Sunday words to 'em, then you 'll have the whole combination. They have a jolly one by the tune of 'Not for Joe;' I'll sing it if you want me to."

"No," said Mrs. Arlington. "I want Nancy Lee. Can you play the accompaniment, Violet?"

Violet made the attempt, but music did not flow from her fingers as it did from Nelly's, and they missed the latter's birdlike voice which usually led the little chorus.

Nelly did not sing, but stood flushed and silent in the shadow of the window curtain, looking with troubled eyes out on the lawn, now growing dim in the fading light. She thought she had lost Mrs. Arlington's good opinion, and for a young girl who had given that lady the fresh, warm admiration of her heart this was a great trial.

"I did right," she thought, "but it was awful hard. I wonder if God has been pleased with me? I have wanted to do wrong all day."

In her humility Nelly did not know that she had come off more than conqueror because she had obeyed the voice of her conscience.

## CHAPTER VI

## WHAT MAUD DID

MAMMA, where are you?" called Violet from the foot of the stairs.

"Here I am. What is wanted?" and Mrs. Arlington came out of her room and stood in the upper hall.

Violet ran up-stairs, two steps at a time, while the other girls remained below, looking up with bright, eager faces.

"O mamma!" said Violet breathlessly, "there is a phonograph down town; a real live phonograph. May we go and see it?"

"Do you want to go down town just to hear a phonograph?" said Mrs. Arlington smiling.

"None of us have ever heard one," said Violet, "and Mr. Alden says they are one of the most wonderful things in the world."

"But it is four o'clock now," said the lady, glancing at her watch.

"But oh, mamma, we want to go this evening. That will be the best of all."

"Well, you must wait and ask your father," said Mrs. Arlington. "If he is willing, I am."

"Papa is down at the quarry and won't be back till six. Do you suppose we can wait, girls?" asked Violet, turning to the others.

"He will say yes if you coax like everything," said Maud. "Papa is twice as apt to let me do a thing as mamma."

"But I want things settled," said Violet. "I hate to leave them hanging."

"Let us plan about the tableaux," suggested Nelly, "then we will forget all about it."

It was Monday afternoon. All the shadows had disappeared from Nelly's face, and she was radiantly happy. To use her own words, Violet's home was the nicest place in the world, Mrs. Arlington was perfectly lovely, and Nelly was having a splendid time. The unpleasant things of the day before were forgotten, for Mrs. Arlington had been as smiling and gracious as ever that morning and had won all the girls' hearts by proposing a set of tableaux to entertain the guests Thanksgiving evening.

Where is the girl who is not made happy

by the prospect of tableaux? No wonder these three were happy planning for these, for Mrs. Arlington placed the house and everything in it at their disposal, consenting to take down the lace curtains, and promising to hunt up white kid slippers and wedding-veils for their adornment.

Of course when his daughter met him at the door with the entreaty that he allow them to go down town to hear the phonograph Mr. Arlington gave his consent at once. He made only one condition, and that was that Jerry must go and drive them. No one objected to that but George, who wanted to drive the girls himself, but his father insisted upon the Irishman's going, for he wanted some errands done which he could not trust to his rattle-brained son.

At seven o'clock Jerry brought the carriage to the door, and they all got in. It was so cold that Mrs. Arlington could not go out on the piazza to see them off, but drew aside the curtains and watched them from the window. The girls waved their hands and George touched his cap as they drove off down the avenue.

"O Vi, your mother is just lovely!" said Nelly warmly, as she nestled under the robes beside her friend.

"So is yours," said Violet merrily; "so we are even."

"Yes, but it is a different kind of loveliness," said Nelly, with a warm glow at her heart as she thought of her gentle little mother.

Jerry left them at the hotel where the phonograph was, and they went in, pausing by the register in the hall to get warm.

The wonderful machine was in the front room, and seated round it were a number of people holding tubes to their ears, listening with absorbed faces, while only a clicking noise could be heard by the others.

"Do n't they look funny?" said Violet, laughing behind her muff.

"It is five cents apiece," reported George. "When those folks get up we will help ourselves to the tubes. What do you want to hear, girls?"

"Everything," ordered Violet.

"Look here!" replied George, "you can't have more than I can pay for."

"Mamma gave me a dollar," said Violet.

"Grandpa is coming Wednesday, and you must have some of your month's allowance left or he will lecture you about throwing away your money."

Soon four of the tubes were vacant and they made haste to secure them.

"What will you have?" asked the proprietor, as the four young people took their seats.

"What do you want, girls?" asked George.

"I want to hear it talk," said Maud eagerly.

"This is a story told by a man in Boston," said the proprietor, making some mysterious changes.

As Nelly put the tubes in her ears a queer little thrill went all over her like an electric current. A thin, small voice, sounding as though it was coming out of the neck of a bottle, began to speak, and a scene was acted upon a small stage before the ear instead of the eye.

"It makes a fellow's head swim to think what a wonderful chap that Edison is," said George, removing the tubes. "What will you take next? We want one of a kind, I suppose."

"I would like to hear a band of music," said Nelly, studying the programme which was pinned on the wall.

"Very well," said the proprietor. "This is one of Sousa's popular band pieces: 'Manhattan Beach March."

Again, on a tiny scale, came a burst of band

music, and Nelly felt as she did when Mr. Alden gave her a shock from the battery.

"I do n't know whether I enjoy it or not," said she, when it was over. "It is so wonderful and strange."

But Violet was eager to hear a song, and after that they adjourned to the back parlor to rest awhile. There were quite a number of young people there who were acquainted with the Arlingtons, and as they came up to speak to them Violet and George introduced their friends, and they had a merry time among themselves out in the back parlor.

"See here," said George, coming up to the group, "did you know that there is a theater troupe here that is going to play to-night?"

"Oh, is n't that splendid!" cried Violet. "Have you got money enough to take us, George?"

"I guess so," he replied, "if we do n't spend it all on the phonograph."

"Is n't it lucky we came down to-night," continued Violet. "We would n't have known a thing about it if we had n't."

"But ought we to go without your father or mother knowing anything about it?" asked Nelly.

"They won't care," said Violet carelessly.

"They always let us go wherever we want to."

"But the play? Are you sure it is good?" asked Nelly, still in doubt, for she had been brought up to avoid second-rate theaters and low exhibitions of any sort.

"For mercy's sake, Nell, do n't make a fuss," said Maud impatiently. "You are determined to spoil all our fun. We are not under Mr. Alden's eye now, so do let us have a good time."

"There is a bill in the office," said George; "come out and look at it."

Violet followed her brother, but Maud and Nelly remained behind.

"Now do n't make a fuss, Nell," said Maud.

"If they decide to go we can't say anything but get all the fun we can out of it."

"Of course I sha'n't make a fuss," replied Nelly indignantly; "I shall have to go if they do, but I do n't think second-class theaters are very nice."

"How do you know that this is second-class?" demanded Maud.

"I do n't know that it is, and hope it is n't, for I love a good pure play," Nelly added honestly.

"I know it is splendid," Violet declared, coming up to them. "We must go."

"But can't we have one more piece from the phonograph?" Maud asked. "I want to hear a cornet solo."

"We have got just twenty minutes." said George, consulting his watch, "that will give us time to hear the phonograph once more."

Nelly took up the tubes, and was soon so absorbed that she did not notice that Maud drew George and Violet to one side. She thought they were with her, until the piece was finished, when, to her surprise, she found she was surrounded with strangers. She looked eagerly round for her friends, and soon saw Maud making her way towards her.

"Come," said she, beckoning, "Jerry is here with the carriage."

"Have they decided not to go to the play?" Nelly asked in surprise.

"We are going—out to the carriage," Maud replied over her shoulder.

Nelly followed, wondering what it all meant, but as Maud seemed in a hurry she did not stop to ask any questions. In the yard they found Jerry waiting beside the carriage.

"You get in first," said Maud, drawing back, and Nelly obeyed, never doubting but that Maud

would follow, and George and Violet would soon make their appearance. But no sooner was she in than Maud disappeared and Jerry took up the reins.

"Wait!" cried Nelly as he was about to drive off. "The others are not here. Maud! Maud! Why, where did she go?" and Nelly put her head out of the carriage and looked about for her friend, but not a sign of her was to be seen; there were only a few young men standing about the yard.

"They are not coming," said Jerry. "She went back into the house."

"But they are coming," Nelly persisted. "Maud must have gone back after them."

"They are going to the theater," Jerry replied.
"They told me to take you home because you did n't want to go."

Poor Nelly! The conviction suddenly flashed upon her that she was not wanted, and they had taken this way to get rid of her.

"Shall I carry you home," said the young Irishman, partly guessing the truth, "or will you go back?"

"No, it is all right," said Nelly proudly; "drive on."

Jerry obeyed, and Nelly shrank back into the corner of the carriage too angry to cry over the way she had been treated. For a moment she was tempted to order Jerry to drive to the depot, take the night train for home, and never speak to Maud, George or Violet again; but she had not brought her purse with her and had no money to buy a ticket. She must go back to the Arlingtons, but would start for home the first thing in the morning, in spite of the Thanksgiving party and the tableaux she had looked forward to with so much pleasure. All her fun was spoiled. How could Violet treat a guest so shamefully! And George! With all his faults he was always polite and honorable.

The first heat of her anger over tears stole down Nelly's cheeks, and she had a little cry all alone in the corner of the carriage. Jerry, the warm-hearted young Irishman, looked anxiously over his shoulder at the little figure crouching on the back seat, but did not venture to say anything in the way of consolation.

Nelly dried her eyes and tried to look as usual as Jerry drew rein at the door and helped her out of the carriage. Mr. and Mrs. Arlington looked up in surprise as she entered the room alone.

"Where are the others?" asked the lady. "Did you come back all alone, Nelly?"

Nelly was spared the trouble of answering by Jerry, who entered the room, hat in hand, and handed a note to his mistress.

"Oh," said she, hastily reading it, "they have staid over to go to a theater that is playing there. You must go for them at ten, Jerry."

Jerry, thus dismissed, went out, and Mr. Arlington, looking at Nelly, who was slowly taking off her wraps, said kindly,

- "Why did n't you stay? Not sick, I hope."
- "No, sir," said Nelly briefly.
- "Violet says that Nelly did n't want to stay, and asked if Jerry could not bring her home," said Mrs. Arlington, referring to the note in her hand.

Nelly's lip curled scornfully. Violet had told a direct lie—Violet whom she had always supposed was the soul of honor.

"She must be sick," Mr. Arlington declared.
"No girl would miss that fun unless she were."

"Are you sick, Nelly?" asked Mrs. Arlington anxiously. "You must have something done for you if you are."

"I am perfectly well," Nelly replied. "Indeed, there is nothing the matter with me."

"Did you think it was not right to go to this theater, Nelly?" asked Mrs. Arlington, an idea occurring to her.

"Mamma does n't allow me to go to plays very often," she replied, "for they are not nice usually, but I did n't know anything about this one."

"You were very foolish to lose your fun," said Mrs. Arlington. "I do n't imagine this is firstclass, but it would have done you no harm to have gone to it."

Nelly made no reply, but leaving her wraps in the hall, asked Mrs. Arlington if she would excuse her as she wished to go to her room. The lady gave her a gracious permission, but as she left the room, Nelly heard Mr. Arlington say:

"What a conscientious little puss she is! I have taken a great fancy to her."

Nelly felt that she did not deserve this compliment, for, in spite of her scruples, she would have gone to the play if her friends had not prevented it.

Mrs. Arlington might have been afraid for her health had she seen her lying on the floor, sobbing as though her heart would break. Poor Nelly! she was sure no one had ever been so ill-treated before; and in the trouble which

seemed so heavy on her young shoulders, she longed for her mother, and wished with all her heart that she was at home. She heard the young people when they returned, and going to the mirror, began to take down and brush out her hair. She gave it fifty strokes every night in hopes that by so doing she would get the curl out of it, for having such kinky hair was a great trial to Nelly.

Presently steps came up the stairs, the knob turned, and Maud entered the room. Nelly did not turn, but continued to brush her pretty wavy hair before the glass.

"Ain't you going to speak to me?" asked Maud, as Nelly did not turn nor look in her direction.

"Maud Farnsworth!" said Nelly, suddenly facing her with flashing, indignant eyes, "I'll never go anywhere with you again, never so long as I live."

"I'm sure I do n't care," said Maud with a gay laugh. "That won't put me out any."

Nelly wheeled back and continued her brushing, counting, "Twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven," as she faced her flushed, indignant image in the mirror. She was hurt that George and

Violet should treat her as they had, but she was so angry with Maud that she could feel the rage burning in her heart.

Some one came running up-stairs, and Violet burst into the room.

"O Nell," she exclaimed, "you ought to have gone! They played the Bartender's Daughter, and we had such fun."

"Nelly is mad with us," said Maud, as Nelly made no reply. "She says she will never go anywhere with us again."

"Why?" asked Violet in astonishment.

"Because we went to the play, I suppose," said Maud, "instead of going home with her."

"Why, she said she wanted to go home," said Violet, more and more surprised.

"When did I say it?" demanded Nelly, turning on her fiercely.

"Why, you told Maud, and she came and told us while you were listening to the phonograph, and George said Jerry could drive you home if you wanted him to."

"You did n't ask me if I wanted Jerry to drive me home," said Nelly with curling lip.

"Maud did while we were getting the tickets. Why, Nellie Jackson, do you think we sent you home because we did n't want you?" demanded Violet, whirling round and facing her friend.

"It looks like it," Nelly replied. "I do n't remember saying anything about wanting Jerry to take me home."

"That is what you told us, Maud," said Violet, turning to her friend, who was sitting on the floor unlacing her boots.

"That is what she told me," said Maud indifferently. "You said you didn't think it right to go to the play because your mother wouldn't approve, so I asked George and Violet if Jerry couldn't take you home."

"You did it to get rid of me," said Nelly hotly, "and cheated me by making me think you were all going home. It was a mean, dishonest trick, and I'll never forgive you—never!"

"O Nelly!" said Violet, half sobbing, "I'm so sorry! I wished ever so many times you were with us, but I thought you wanted to go home. Please forgive me! I'm just as sorry as I can be. I would n't have had it happen for anything."

"I don't blame you, Vi," said Nelly gently.
"I see that it was n't your fault."

"I'm the one to blame," said Maud, drawing on her pretty pink bedroom slippers. "She says I was cheating her, when I thought I was doing it for her pleasure. Well, I'm glad I do n't get mad every time things do n't go straight. If you wanted to go to the play why did n't you say so instead of pretending that you thought it was wrong?"

"If I had only spoken to her myself," said Violet, crying in earnest now, "or if you had n't gone while we were getting the tickets. George did n't have money enough and wanted my dollar."

"I do n't blame you, Vi," Nelly repeated, "so do n't cry any more."

"But it was horrid to treat you so," she sobbed, "and I did want you all the time."

Nelly could not doubt Violet's sincerity, and it comforted her to know that one friend was true; but her heart was filled with a bitter rage toward Maud. She could not speak to her, but went about her preparations for the night in silence, irritated all the more by the hateful little smile with which Maud watched her. When it came to saying her prayers she found she could not while her heart was so full of rage, and, almost for the first time in her life, Nelly crept into bed without first kneeling beside it.

Maud felt no sin burdening her conscience, however, but knelt beside the bed, looking like a white angel with her beautiful pale-gold hair rippling over her shoulders. Nelly's lip curled as she watched her, and turning her face to the wall she moved as far away from her companion as she could, nursing the rage in her heart.

But Nelly could not sleep, for when darkness fell on the pretty chamber conscience awoke. It was wrong to feel such burning hate towards Maud. She must forgive her, but how could she when Maud had been so mean—had actually *lied?* Nelly looked upon a lie with unspeakable contempt, and felt that after what Maud had done she could never respect her again.

But Nelly had been so well brought up that she could not cherish her bitter feelings without great uneasiness. Christ had said to forgive until seventy times seven, and had told his disciples to pray for those who despitefully used them. Could she pray for Maud?

Poor Nelly turned and twisted long after Maud was peacefully sleeping. Once she slipped out of bed, and, drawing aside the curtains, looked out on the clear, starlight night. How beautiful and peaceful it was! Looking up into the pure

depths of the sky she could not cherish anger; as she hoped to be forgiven she must forgive. Kneeling by the window she crossed her arms upon the ledge, and, bowing her head upon them, prayed: then she crept back into bed and fell asleep.

But the next morning it was very hard to put into practice what she had felt in the night. Maud was so complacent, going about her toilet humming a little tune, and utterly ignoring Nelly's presence.

"I won't be mad with her," thought Nelly. "I will make up, though, if she would only say she was sorry, it would be so much easier."

But there was no hope of Maud's doing that; Nelly must make all the advances.

"Maud," said she slowly, "I said more than I ought to last night. Of course I did n't mean what I said."

"Of course you said more than you ought to," Maud replied. "I was in the right, and you were very unladylike."

"I'm sorry," Nelly began, but the words seemed to choke her; it was so hard to forgive Maud when she would not own she had done anything wrong.

"You might have seen," Maud continued, "that I was trying to please you. There was no need of your flying into a rage."

"Let us say no more about it," said Nelly, turning to the mirror; her refuge of the evening before. "Is it possible," she thought, looking into the reflection of her honest brown eyes, "that Maud does not know that she *lied?* Has n't the girl any conscience at all?"

## CHAPTER VII

## THE GATHERING OF THE CLAN

THE events of that evening wrought discord between the three girls and nothing went right next day. Though Nelly did not doubt Violet's sincerity, she could not help feeling that she and Maud would enjoy themselves better alone, and almost wished she had not accepted her friend's invitation.

They worked over their tableaux all the morning, but Nelly could not help feeling left out in the cold. Maud was to have all the prettiest parts. She must be the bride because she was so pretty, and the angel because her hair was so lovely; Nelly could have all the funny, ridiculous parts, but Maud was the one to wear the white slippers and the wedding-veil.

Mrs. Arlington did not suspect the trouble, and George, entirely ignorant of any deception practised the night before, had gone off early in the morning on the back of his favorite horse.

Mail time brought some letters to Maud and Violet in which Nelly had no share, so, leaving them alone, she went into the library, and, curling up in a large chair, looked disconsolately out on the fields so brown and bare, and the hills clad in the hardy green of the fir and spruce.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Arlington, entering the room and taking a cigar from the case on the chimney-piece. "Homesick, Nelly?"

"No, sir," she replied, looking up with a little smile.

"You are looking rather blue," he replied, striking a match. "Where are Violet and the other girl?"

"They are up-stairs."

"And you are left down here alone. You look as though you wanted cheering up. I am going to drive down to the quarry. Would you like to go with me? It is a bright, clear day; a trifle cold, but you won't mind that."

"Had you just as soon take me as not?" asked Nelly, her face brightening immediately.

"Why, of course I had," replied Mr. Arlington;

"if you care anything about going?"

"I would just love to," declared Nelly, jumping up in delight. "Then bundle up and come along."

Nelly needed no other bidding, and hurrying into her wraps, ran out to where her host was waiting beside a light wagon to which was fastened a coal-black horse with one white forefoot.

Nelly often looked back on that ride as one of the pleasantest things about her visit. Mr. Arlington made no attempt to entertain her, but smoked his cigar in silence, until they reached the quarry, when her eager questions pleased him so much that he took her all over the works, explaining everything to a most interested listener.

"You are a real little business woman," said he, tucking her into the wagon for the drive home, "and know more about the works now than Violet does."

"I like to know how things are made," she replied, "and mean to go through all the factories I can."

"That is right," said Mr. Arlington approvingly. "It is a pity you are not a boy. You would soon have a place in the world and be able to take care of your mother."

"I mean to do that anyway," said Nelly decidedly, "if I am nothing but a girl."

"I believe you will," said the gentleman heartily, "but I wish you were a boy, so that I could give you a place on the works."

"I'm sorry you can't," said she merrily, "but I'm just as grateful as though I could go to work in the quarry."

When they were nearly home George overtook them, and reining up his horse, who pranced and arched his neck under his driver's restraining hand, demanded:

"Where in time have you been with father, Nelly?"

"Where it would be well if you went occasionally, young man," replied Mr. Arlington.

"Has he been dragging you over the quarry, Nell?" asked the boy in surprise.

"He has n't been dragging me by any means," returned Nelly. "He very kindly showed me all over the works, and I am very grateful to him for taking me there."

"You have made father your friend for life," said George, "if you have let him take you over the quarry. He worships that granite."

"It would be more to your credit, young man," said his father, "if you took some interest in that granite."

"I should think you would," said Nelly, "for you are a boy and can do something there. Mr. Arlington says he would give me a place there if I were a boy. I wish I was."

"He is nothing but a weathercock," said Mr. Arlington, looking proudly at his handsome son for all he spoke so disapprovingly. "When I was his age I was making my own living, but he never earned a dollar in his life. He has no more idea of what his future career will be than he had when he was four years old, nor half so much, for then he declared he was going to keep a candy store, but now he has no idea of doing anything."

"I'm not going to stand fire any longer," declared George. "No more lectures for the present; I'm off. Good-bye," and, saucily touching his cap, he gave the word to his horse and was soon lost to sight over the brow of the hill.

When Nelly got home she found him receiving a lecture from the girls.

"What did you go away for!" said Maud with a pretty frown. "We wanted you to practise in our tableaux."

"You must n't expect me to toast over the fire all day," he returned. "I must cool my brain this

vacation, for it is fevered from too close application to study."

"Where in the world have you been, Nelly?" asked Violet. "We hunted for you everywhere."

"Your father asked me to go down to the quarry with him," she replied, "so I went and had a lovely time. I did not know you wanted me for anything."

"Down to the quarry?" repeated Violet. "What a funny girl you are, Nell, to enjoy poking round those old granite works!"

"That is just like Mr. Arlington," said his wife, who sat by the open fire with a novel in her hand. "He drags everybody down to that quarry that he can get to go. You ought not to have taken Nelly to the quarry this cold day, Henry."

"The ride did her good," replied her husband.

"Just look at her cheeks; they are the healthiest looking pair in the room. If you would go out and get up a glow like that it would be better for you than sitting over the fire all day."

"It makes me shiver to think of riding in this cold country," said Mrs. Arlington; "you have brought in so much cold air the room feels chilly. Is the register open, George?"

"Yes, and a perfect blast of heat is coming up,"
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said George, from the front parlor, where he was gracefully festooned astride a chair.

"We must make the most of George while he is here," said Maud, "so come into the library while we tell you where you are to stand for the Bride of Lammermoor."

"Am I to be the bride?" he asked. "How sweet I'll look in my white veil!"

"How foolish you are!" pouted Maud; "of course you are to be the bridegroom."

"Then who is to be the bride?" he demanded.

"Guess!" said she coquettishly.

"You, of course," he replied frankly, "because you are the prettiest. Vi would look like a squaw dressed up in all that toggery. Tableaux are rubbish anyway. Why not have a scene from the Bartender's Daughter? That is a beautiful, refined play. You will never know what you missed by not going last night, Nell."

"You can't expect Nell to care anything about it," said Maud. "I wonder that she considers it right to take part in a tableau."

"You need n't say that, Maud," spoke up Violet.
"You know Nell would have gone last night if it had n't been for us."

"Why, how did we hinder her?" asked George,

who was completely in the dark as to the real facts of the case. "She wanted to go home."

"No, she did n't," Violet began, but Nelly laid her fingers on her lips, saying:

"We are not going to talk about that any more. Let us go into the library and tell George how he is to stand in the tableaux."

But George's suspicions were aroused, and though Nelly would not allow anything said on the subject he got Violet alone and made her tell him the whole story. He said little, but was profoundly thoughtful for him, and after his sister left him he stood by the window whistling and drumming on the pane for the space of five minutes.

The next day active preparations for Thanksgiving commenced. The house was all opened; blinds were thrown back in rooms long unused, and fires were kindled way up in the third story, for a large party of relatives was expected on the afternoon train.

About three o'clock George came along with a large flag in his arms.

"Come up into the cupola, Nell," said he, and help me fling this to the breeze."

Nelly immediately threw down her book and

followed George up two flights of stairs, to the narrow passageway which led to a trap-door in the roof. A gust of wind met them as they emerged into the little room, and George opened the window to seize the rope dangling from the flagstaff.

"Do you see the carriage on the way to the station, Nell?" he asked.

"Is that where we were the other night when you said we had just fifteen minutes to reach home?" Nelly asked in reply.

"Yes, that is a fifteen minutes' run with a load," George replied. "Want to help pull this up, Nell? Three cheers for the red, white and blue!"

Nelly took hold of the rope and together they pulled up the flag to where it caught the breeze and floated out over the roof of the castle.

"Is n't it lovely here!" said Nelly, looking out of the window, while the wind ruffled her hair which she had arranged so carefully for company. "I should think you would just love your home, George."

"See here, Nell," said he, securely fastening the rope which held the flag, "have you had a good time here?" "Just perfectly splendid," she replied warmly. "Why, how could I help it?"

"It was awfully mean about the other night," said George frankly. "I made Vi tell me all about it. I hope you do n't think I had a hand in it?"

"I did at first," Nelly replied, "and it made me feel awfully to think that you and Vi should treat me so, but I know now that you were not to blame."

"Were n't you up and down mad, Nell?" asked the boy. "If a fellow should treat me that way I should tell him what I thought, in pretty plain language."

"I was mad at first," Nelly confessed. "I could have said and done almost anything. I can't think of it now in a calm and even frame of mind," she added with a laugh.

"Well," said George, drawing a long breath, "a fellow can 't say much, but he can keep up a dreadful thinking."

"I can't imagine why she wanted to get rid of me," said Nelly in a puzzled tone.

"Why, you see," said George confidentially, "Maud does n't like too many girls in the party when she goes anywhere. She would rather Violet had n't invited you here at all."

"I don't see how I interfere with her pleasure,' said Nelly scornfully. "I have n't tried to get rid of her company at any time."

"It sounds terribly conceited," said George, "and I would n't say it to any one but you, but Maud is awfully proud of the fact that she is intimate with us, and puts on no end of airs, Vi says, because we asked her to come here. She did n't want you to go to the play the other night because she is sort of jealous, and is afraid we will pay you more attention than we do her."

Nelly made no answer to this speech except to slightly curl her lip.

"I knew you would look that way," declared George, "but it is the truth all the same."

"I should n't believe any one could be so foolish," said Nelly scornfully.

"Do n't repeat what I 've said, Nell," said George anxiously, "for I would n't have any one know that I even thought it."

"Of course I won't," Nelly declared. "We won't say any more about it."

"Perhaps we 'd better go down," said George, "for it is cold up here; your nose is as red as a cherry."

"Is it?" said Nelly, rubbing that organ. "I

suppose if Maud had come up here her nose would have remained as white as a lily."

"Risk her letting her nose get red," said George. "She thinks too much of her looks for that."

"There, George Arlington!" said Nelly, pausing on the narrow stairs. "Who was it gave me a lecture for talking about girls behind their backs?"

"We will drop the subject now," replied George. "Let us talk about politics."

"Why, Nelly, you are nearly frozen," said Mrs. Arlington, as they entered the back parlor. "Come here to the fire and get warm. You ought not to have kept her up there so long, George. She will get cold, and then what will Mrs. Jackson say to us?"

"You are as blue as an indigo bag, Nelly," said Maud, congratulating herself that she was looking her prettiest for the expected guests.

"I must have the appearance of a tattooed savage," said Nelly. "George just told me that my nose was as red as a cherry."

"Did George tell you that?" asked Maud in a tone of satisfaction.

"Yes; so I must present a charming appearance—red and blue."

"The fire will soon remedy those defects, Nelly," said Mrs. Arlington pleasantly. "It was not very polite in George. I'm afraid he thinks you are as much his sister as Violet. I hope you have n't taken cold staying up there so long."

"No, indeed. I don't get cold easily, and am as warm as toast now," and Nelly nestled down on an ottoman between Mrs. Arlington's chair and the fireplace.

The lady looked down on her with a smile as she softly stroked the wavy brown hair, for she had taken a fancy to the warm-hearted young girl, who she knew greatly admired herself.

Nelly dreaded the arrival of the guests, and wished they were not coming, they were so cosey as they were, all gathered before the fire; she on an ottoman beside Mrs. Arlington's chair, George stretched out on the soft rug at their feet, and Violet and Maud in one large easy-chair on the other side of the fireplace. Mr. Arlington soon joined them, and, leaning on the back of his wife's chair, played with the soft coils of her hair, pulling out and putting back the shell hairpins, until she begged of him not to disarrange her hair when company was expected.

The sound of wheels broke up the pleasant

group, and Nelly drew shyly back into the corner as they all went out to welcome the newcomers, for she was a little afraid of the handsomely dressed strangers.

What a lot of them there were! Nelly felt bewildered as the Arlingtons introduced uncles, aunts and cousins, who kindly shook hands with the young stranger and then forgot all about her, as they talked eagerly about their journey, commented on each other's health and appearance, and gayly recalled past merrymakings.

The house was full of bustle and noise, and Nelly in the corner of the sofa looked on unnoticed, but not forgotten, for when the late dinner was announced Mr. Arlington beckoned to her, and giving her a seat by his side, made her feel safe beneath his wing.

Nelly enjoyed the dinner as she listened and smiled at the merry sallies of the company. She soon got so that she understood the relation they bore to each other. There was a sister of Mr. Arlington's, a Mrs. Ashton, and her two stylish young lady daughters; a sweet-faced maiden lady, whom they all called Cousin Anna, a nephew of Mr. Arlington's, a young Mr. Robertson, and last, but not least, Mr. Matterson, a fine-looking

old gentleman, with white hair, and very sharp eyes which seemed to see everything that went on. He was very stately and dignified, and Nelly felt sure she should be afraid of him, he asked so many queer questions and made such abrupt speeches.

As Mrs. Arlington was an only child, George and Violet were the only grandchildren Mr. Matterson had, and George, from the moment of his advent, had been declared his heir. As soon as he was old enough to understand anything, the boy had come to expect a lecture from his grandfather whenever they met, for, though he was the idol of the old gentleman's heart, nothing he could do ever pleased him.

Only once during the meal was Nelly called upon to make a remark. Looking round the table Mr. Matterson happened to spy her, and inquired at once:

"Who is that you have got alongside of you, Henry?"

"This is one of Violet's friends from Exeter," Mr. Arlington replied. "Her name is Miss Nelly Jackson. The children board with her mother."

"From Exeter are you, young lady?" said Mr.

Matterson, fixing his sharp eyes on Nelly's blushing face.

- "Yes, sir," she replied frankly.
- "George boards with your mother, does he?" was the next question.
  - "Yes, sir."
- "Does he behave himself?" demanded the old gentleman.
- "Oh, yes, indeed," said Nelly, blushing more and more as the eyes of all present were directed towards her.
- "Never gets into scrapes, I suppose," said Mr. Matterson gravely.
  - "Not very often," said Nelly hesitating.
- "Not very often!" repeated the old gentleman.

  "That means that he does sometimes. What does he do?"
- "Oh, nothing very bad," said Nelly in distress.
- "I'll tell you one thing he did, grandpa," said Violet, coming to Nelly's aid, "he put a rooster into the teacher's desk the morning after election."
- "I hope the teacher punished him well for it."
  - "No, he did n't, he only laughed."

"Is that all?" said Mr. Matterson in pretended disgust. "In my day a boy who did that would have been flogged for it. Now, Miss Nelly Jackson, you must keep your eye on your boarder, and if he doesn't walk straight, just let him know that you don't approve of it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Nelly, smiling in spite of herself, and thinking she was going to like that queer old gentleman after all.

"Then see that you do," and dismissing her with a short nod, Mr. Matterson turned his attention to some one else.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE THANKSGIVING PARTY

WHAT are you going to wear this evening, Violet?"

"My blue India silk with the white lace."

Maud asked this all-important question as she stood before the glass arranging her lovely, wavy hair.

The girls had gone to their rooms to dress for dinner, which was to be at five o'clock. The short November twilight was falling fast. Lights had been lighted all over the house, for it had been a dull, gray day. Just before they went up-stairs, George had joyfully announced that it was snowing, and they would be able to wind up their holidays with a grand sleigh-ride.

Nelly sat on the floor, lacing up her pretty boots, while the other girls chatted about their toilets. If only she had a white dress to put on how much better she would feel! How dark and plain her winter dress of soft plaid

would look, beside Violet's dark blue India silk with its lovely trimmings of lace, and Maud's silk waist which she had spread out on the bed! The ladies had all gone to their rooms to dress, and as she had passed the Misses Ashton's open door Nelly had seen one of the young ladies before their mirror arrayed in delicate silk of palest gray. If only she had a silk dress! How she would look in her heavy plaid when everyone else was dressed in light, delicate fabrics!

"What are you going to wear, Nelly?" asked Maud, turning from the glass.

"My plaid," said Nelly bluntly; "it is all I have."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Maud. "You ought to have brought an evening-dress with you."

"I would if I had had one to bring," said Nelly, jumping up off the floor.

"Perhaps Violet would lend you one," proposed Maud. "You are about the same size."

"No, thank you," said Nelly, shortly, "I do n't care to borrow other people's clothes."

"You look nice in that plaid dress, Nelly," said Violet, from the adjoining room. "Mamma said Sunday how pretty and becoming it was."

This little compliment made Nelly feel better, but the little imp, Envy, had taken up his place in her heart, and she sighed as she tied a knot of ribbon in her hair and gazed at herself in the glass. Her dress looked thick and heavy beside the silk and lace the other girls had on, and though it was not the season for thin dresses, the whole house was so light and warm it seemed like fairyland to Nelly.

Mr. Arlington took great pains with his green-house, but it was robbed for the Thanksgiving party. Flowers were everywhere, and each guest found at his or her plate a lovely little nosegay. Nelly's was a bunch of delicate pink oleanders which she fastened in her dress, glad to have something to light it up.

Nelly had never attended such a dinner-party before. The table was a marvel of beauty in her eyes; the courses bewildered her, and the well-trained servants movingly so silently about made her think of the genii in her fairy-tales. But it did not seem like a Thanksgiving feast, for not a single acknowledgment was paid to the Giver of all the bounty, nor an expression of thanksgiving uttered by any one.

It lasted two hours, they sat so long sipping

their coffee out of their tiny china cups, and eating the fruit brought to our cold shores from the sunny southern lands. At last they rose from the table, and Mrs. Arlington told the girls to go at once to the library and get ready for the tableaux. She was just leaving the dining-room when a servant beckoned to her. An annoyed expression crossed her face, for nothing put her out more than a jar in her domestic machinery.

"What is it, Maria?" she asked with a slight frown.

"There's a poor woman been waiting out in the kitchen to see you ever since you sat down to dinner," said the girl rapidly. "I told her it was no use, that you could n't see her to-night, but she felt so bad I promised to speak to you as soon as I could."

"What does she want?" asked Mrs. Arlington, in a decidedly impatient tone.

"She wants food and clothes," replied the girl.

"She says they have n't a mouthful in the house to eat, and her husband is very sick."

"Is that all?" said the lady. "Pack up a basketful of food and send her home."

"She said she wanted to see you," and the girl looked earnestly at her mistress.

"I can't see her now," said the lady decidedly. "Give her anything she wants and send her home, and do not call me for anything of the kind again when I have company," and going into the parlor, the train of her handsome gown sweeping over the soft carpet, Mrs. Arlington soon forgot all about the message that had come to her from the kitchen.

Maria, the servant girl, had risked a good deal by calling her mistress' attention to an object of charity when she was giving a dinner-party; but the warm-hearted girl could not bear to see the poor woman crouching by the stove, her calico dress, thin shawl, and ragged boots wet with exposure to the weather, without trying to do what she could for her.

Mrs. Arlington did not know the meaning of the word want, and had entirely forgotten the fact that it was snowing out-of-doors. If she could have seen the poor woman crouching by the stove she might have been moved to pity, but as it was she thought she had done her duty by ordering Maria to give her whatever she wanted and soon forgot her entirely.

The girls, impatiently awaiting her presence in the library, were surrounded by a pile of

finery; Maud was being arrayed in her bridal robes under Nelly's hands, who was acting the part of dressing-maid, while Violet, with her raven hair flying, was lacing her waist into a trim bodice.

Mrs. Arlington entered into the fun with as much interest as the girls, and arranging the tall screens for a background, draped them with lace curtains, then placed two lamps with scarlet shades so as to cast a red glow over them with a fine effect. The audience was much pleased with the pretty wedding-scene disclosed when the curtains were drawn back, and called for it again and again.

The tableaux represented titles of books which the audience were expected to guess. The next was Nelly in an old-fashioned costume, standing, knitting in hand, beside a chair.

"The Old Fashioned Girl," announced Miss Ashton, as George drew the curtains together again.

A vigorous clapping of hands caused him to open them just in time to disclose Nelly whisking behind the screens.

"'The Vacant Chair' you observe, ladies and gentlemen," he announced amid much laughter and clapping of hands.

Maud had all the prettiest parts. Besides being the Bride of Lammermoor, she was the Guardian Angel, standing—in a lovely silken robe, her pretty hair falling about her,—over George stretched out on a table and chair in the very attitude of despair. Violet, with her dark hair and eyes, was A Roman Singer, in pretty Italian dress, and Ramona in brilliant costume, half Mexican, half Indian.

To Nelly was given the funny parts. She was Samantha at the Centennial; and in a horrid old bonnet and shawl, surrounded by boys, bundles and bandboxes, went on Their Wedding Journey with George.

"That girl with the light hair is a beauty," said Mr. Walter Robertson to Cousin Anna, "but the dark-eyed one takes my fancy most," to which statement Cousin Anna nodded a smiling assent.

George transformed himself from The Abbot, to A Tramp Abroad, and changed from a bride-groom to a despairing wretch, and, at last, surprised even his mother by coming down-stairs in full uniform of navy-blue, sword, cocked hat and all.

"Why, George!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlington, where did you get those things?"

- "I found them in the attic."
- "But the tableaux are over."

"Never mind, I will do for something. Now that I have got on this toggery I want them to see me. Announce me as The Warrior Bold. Only wait till I manufacture a mustache," and seizing a burnt match he began to touch up his features before the glass.

"You ridiculous fellow!" laughed his mother. "I had forgotten all about that old uniform. You do look well in it; it is a pity they can't see you. Wait; I have an idea. Come here, Nelly, and put this kerchief round your neck. There, it is all you need. Sit down here. It is just perfect. Pull back the curtains, Violet."

Seating herself at the piano Mrs. Arlington began to play The Girl I Left Behind Me, while Violet drew back the curtains, announcing that it was "positively the last appearance" of the Vincent Crummles.

The audience had scattered, but at the sound of the piano they all gathered again in the front-parlor, looking with exclamations of delight at the pretty picture. Nelly was seated, her face buried in her hands, while George leaned over her with lover-like devotion, only marred by a

slight caress given to his make-believe mustache and a triumphant glance directed to his Cousin Walter who was applauding vigorously.

"A War Time Wooing," announced Miss Ashton. "Is n't it pretty?"

"The best of all," declared Mr. Matterson. "Why did you leave it for an afterthought?"

"That tune makes me feel young again," said Mr. Arlington.

Maud's eyes fairly turned green with envy as Violet pulled the curtains together. What had Nelly done to win such a shower of compliments? Merely tied a soft white kerchief round her neck and sat down with her face buried in her hands. It was nothing compared to the Bride of Lammermoor, and yet they were all praising her, saying how bright and attractive she was. Maud wished there was some way of getting rid of her as she had the other night, but she knew it was of no use to try. It was a long happy evening and when, at last, Nelly laid her head on her pillow, she was too excited to sleep but lay smiling to herself in the dark, as she recalled the events of the day.

After her guests had gone to their rooms Mrs.

Arlington suddenly remembered the message Maria had given her, and said to her husband: "By the way, Henry, Maria says there was a woman here begging to-night, whose husband was very sick."

"It must have been Norton's wife," Mr. Arlington replied. "He has been sick some time and not able to work. I hope you sent them something."

"I told Maria to pack up a basket of things for the poor creature," replied his wife, "and you can trust her for that, for she would feed every tramp and beggar that puts in an appearance at the side door."

"Norton always was a poor kind of a fellow," continued Mr. Arlington. "He is sick with the asthma half the time, and now it has settled into consumption. Of course they have half a dozen children and his wife is not good for anything."

"That is always the way," said Mrs. Arlington. "There ought to be a law to prevent such creatures from getting married."

"They want some comfort," said Mr. Arlington, winding up his watch. "I suppose Norton loves his wife and children as much as I do mine, even if he can't support them."

"I do n't see how he can," said the lady in a tone of disgust. "The children seemed to enjoy themselves to-night. Dear me, their vacation is nearly over! I cannot stay here after they go back to school, it will be so lonesome. How handsome George looked in that uniform. You must get Violet a new watch for a Christmas present, for she has carried that cheap one ever since she was a little girl. She will soon be old enough to take into society, and how proud I shall be of my pretty daughter! She must finish at a more fashionable school than Exeter Academy, Henry."

"Send her anywhere you please," replied her husband. "I gave the children up to you long ago."

In thinking about her own darlings Mrs. Arlington forgot all about the poor woman who had no right to have any—who, at the moment when Mrs. Arlington stood before the mirror in her luxurious dressing-room, was watching beside her dying husband, while the little ones crawled into bed all dressed to keep from freezing, for the last bit of fuel had burned to a heap of ashes, and the snow was piling up outside.

The next morning the young people were jubilant, for everything was covered with a pure,

white snow which the sun caused to gleam with dazzling brightness. It lay piled up on the dark green spruces and evergreens, while the scarlet rose-berries peeped shyly out from a nest of white. Over all bent the clear, blue sky, while the still, cold air set the blood to tingling.

While the paths were being shoveled the girls went out and threw handfuls of soft snow at each other, and George and his cousin Walter coming from the stable joined in the fun, taking care that their snowballs went over the girls' heads while they themselves were pelted unmercifully. Jerry, shovel in hand, looked on grinning at the fun, enjoying it as much as any of them.

After breakfast they started on a sleigh-ride, George and the three girls in one sleigh, Mr. Robertson and the young ladies in another, while Mr. Arlington carried Cousin Anna and Mr. Matterson down to the quarry. Mrs. Arlington and her sister-in-law were left alone to chat over their fancy-work beside the fire.

Before they had begun to look for the return of the sleighing-party bells were heard, and George and the three girls burst into the room very much excited. Violet's eyes were unusually bright, and Nelly was very pale.

- "O mamma!" "O Mrs. Arlington!" they exclaimed breathlessly.
  - "Oh, it was dreadful!"
- "And we did n't know. We must do something right away."
- "To think we were so happy and those little children were freezing!"
- "And their father was dying, and they were all alone."
- "What are you children talking about?" asked Mrs. Ashton, taking off her eyeglasses to survey the girls.
- "It was the man who worked in the quarry and wheezed so," said Violet. "He died last night, mamma, and it is so dreadful to think we did n't know and were dancing. It makes me feel like the wicked rich man in the Bible," and the excited girl burst into tears.
- "There, darling, you could not help it," said Mrs. Arlington, drawing her daughter down into her lap. "You should not take your sister to such places, George."
- "We could n't help it, mamma," said the boy, soberly. "When we rode by, the oldest girl came out and hailed us. She said her father was dead and they had n't a stick of wood in the house."

"Think of it, mamma," said Violet. "If I had known it last night I think my dinner would have choked me."

"I hope you did n't go in," said Mrs. Arlington anxiously. "You are so easily excited, and such scenes affect you so."

"Yes, they did," said George. "Violet and Nelly staid there while we went after father and Cousin Anna."

"O Nelly! O Violet!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlington. "What a scene for you two children! You ought not to have left them, George."

"I could n't get Nelly away," said the boy, "and Violet would n't leave her."

"The little children were nearly frozen," said Nelly, "and so was the poor woman, though she was so dazed she did n't know it."

"What did your father do?" asked Mrs. Arlington.

"He ordered a load of wood sent there at once," replied George. "You ought to have seen how the men jumped to the work. Cousin Anna went back with me, and when the wood came made a cup of tea with her own hands."

"Nelly and I could n't do anything but rub

the children's hands and feet and promise them everything we could think of," said Violet. "I thought George would never come."

"When Cousin Anna and I went in," said George, "we found Nell and Vi each with a baby in her arms, crying over them like everything. They had taken off their cloaks and wrapped the two oldest children up in them."

"O girls!" said Mrs. Arlington anxiously; "I'm afraid you took cold."

"I thought of that," said Maud. "It was so cold I did n't dare stay. There was n't anything I could do either."

"Those children had staid there all night," said Violet indignantly. "I guess we won't die from staying there half an hour."

"They took exercise enough trotting the babies to prevent taking cold," said George, whose spirits were reviving.

"You need n't say anything," retorted Violet.
"I saw you winking your eyes to keep back the tears."

"Cold always makes my eyes water," said he calmly.

"Is Cousin Anna there now?" asked Mrs. Arlington.

"Yes," replied Violet, "and I have got a list of things she wants sent down."

"Very well, I will get them, and George can take them down before dinner;" and, rising, Mrs. Arlington left the room, reflecting that if she had known it was fuel the woman wanted the night before she would have sent some down, so she did not see that she was at all to blame for the condition in which her son and daughter had found the suffering family.

## CHAPTER IX

## BESETTING SINS

SOON the vacation visit, Thanksgiving party, and all the events of the ten days were but memories, for the holidays were over and the young people were in the midst of their winter's work.

Early in the term Miss Emerson had promised to get up a play to be exhibited on Washington's birthday, and Mr. Alden gave them one evening a week for rehearsals, which were galanights for those who were fortunate enough to be selected as actors.

George, who was an especial favorite of Miss Emerson's, was chosen for hero, while Maud, because she was the prettiest girl in the school, was selected for heroine. Frank, who possessed a dramatic talent, was given the part of villain, while Nelly, because she could talk Irish and act a funny part to perfection, was the servant-girl, and Violet was her fine-lady mistress. Joe Allen

was a bashful country youth, and Mary was honored with the part of George's mother.

"Do n't you allow visitors at the rehearsals?" asked Mrs. Jackson, as the young people were preparing to go to the academy hall one evening. She thought Effie and Jessie watched the others rather wistfully, and was sorry to have them left out of the fun.

"No, indeed," said Nelly, tugging on her overshoes. "Why, Mother Jackson, these rehearsals are shrouded in mystery. No one is to know a thing about this play till the last night, when we are to burst upon the public in a blaze of glory."

"Oh, the whole school does n't know that I am George's mother," said Mary, "and are not the whole time calling after me: 'My dear boy, kneel and receive your mother's blessing'!"

"I think Maud would prefer being George's mother," said Nelly, "for he won't make love worth a cent. It is so ridiculous to see them addressing tender speeches to each other away across the stage."

"George says he is waiting till the last night," said Violet, "and then he is going to do it all right."

"I do n't believe he will," declared Nelly. "He

will get behind a chair and act just as he does now. George does look so foolish."

"What is that about George?" demanded that young man, appearing in the doorway, buttoned up to the chin.

"Never mind," replied Mary, "little boys can't expect to hear everything that is said about them."

"Since you have been my mother you have grown ten years older," retorted George. "You won't need to be made up the last night; you'll do, just as you are."

"I feel too old for such nonsense any way," Mary declared. "I ought to stay at home and study this evening instead of going to the rehearsal."

"I should think it would be fun," said Effie.
"I wish I could go."

"I do n't see why you can 't," said Mrs. Jackson; "it is a school affair."

"I'd let you go," said Mary, "but I'm afraid Miss Emerson would n't like it.

"Mary had two little Lambs,
Their fleece was white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went,
The Lambs were sure to go.

They followed to the play one night,
Which was against the rule,
And laughed and laughed to see their friends
A-playing of the fool.

And so the teacher turned them out,
But still they lingered ne—ar,
And waited patiently about
Till Mary did appe—ar."

All this George chanted through his nose.

"I wish we had some other name," said Jessie plaintively.

"I would n't mind him," said Mary scornfully; "he is not worth it."

"Of course I am not worth minding," said George meekly. "Are you ready, mother? Will you accept my arm to support your feeble steps?"

As the holiday drew near lessons were neglected, and the actors' minds were full of costumes, stage arrangements and rehearsals.

"Miss Emerson wants us to have a dress-rehearsal this evening," said Nelly, flying into the schoolroom one noon, "and we are going to make Mary up so that you won't know her."

"How are you going to do it?" asked Joe Allen.

"That is a secret," replied Nelly; "but we are

going to give her wrinkles and crows'-feet, and have got the loveliest gray wig. She will look splendid and old."

"Won't any one recognize her?" asked Joe curiously.

"Not a soul," declared Nelly. "No one will dream of her being a young girl at all when we get her made up, but will think that we have got a real, genuine old woman to serve as George's mother;" and then she went to her seat without a thought of what she had said, until her words were brought up accusingly against her.

She was late to the rehearsal that evening, and went at once to the dressing-room to put on her costume, which she had brought in a bundle under her arm. She was arranging her hair a la Bridget when she heard voices on the other side of the thin partition which she recognized as Joe's and Mary's.

"I do n't think I should have any trouble in recognizing you," the former was saying. "You do n't look quite sixty yet."

"Who said I was going to?" demanded Mary.

"Why, Nelly Jackson said they were going to make you up so that no one would know you."

"Oh, Nell Jackson!" said Mary, in a tone of

deep disgust, "you can't tell anything by what she says."

"Why, Mary!" exclaimed Joe, "you do n't mean that Nelly does n't tell the truth?"

"She does n't lie; do n't for mercy sake, Joe, think I meant that Nelly lies; she only stretches the truth till it is pulled out to such an extent you can 't recognize it."

"I'm sure she does n't mean to stretch things," said Joe, in a troubled voice.

"Oh, she thinks it is funny," Mary continued, "and has got so she can't make a plain statement. She said to-night at the supper-table that Mrs. Gibbs' singing had started the roof off of the house so that the kitchen plastering had cracked. Of course we all knew she didn't mean a word of it."

"But sometimes you do n't know that she is joking," said Joe gravely. "I did n't this noon, and told several people that they would not recognize you."

"When you know her as well as I do," replied Mary, "you will learn not to believe half she says."

"I shall remember and not repeat any more of her statements," said Joe, moving away. Poor Nelly! All through this conversation she had stood staring into the glass with wide-open, frightened eyes. So that was the opinion her friends had of her! They could n't believe half she said; she, Nelly Jackson, who scorned a lie, and despised Maud Farnsworth because she had detected her in an untruth.

At first she was indignant with Mary for speaking of her so; but when her friend went on to repeat some of her speeches, and conscientious Joe, exact to a hair in all his statements, regretted that he had repeated something she had said, Nelly hung her head with shame.

The girls often laughed at Joe because he was so particular about repeating what he heard. He never guessed at a thing, or stated it to be "about" so and so, but was absolutely sure of everything he said, and now he was troubled because he had repeated a statement of Nelly Jackson's that was not true.

"I hope he will say that I lied," said Nelly fiercely to herself. "It will do me good to be humiliated. What right have I to look down on Maud when the girls can 't believe half I say. But indeed, I don't mean to lie," tears coming into her eyes. "Oh, I wish I had been born

dumb! But that is cowardly. God gave me my tongue; if I dishonor him with it I am both cowardly and dishonest. Oh, do help me to keep the door of my lips, dear Lord."

God hears such prayers as that, though they are only yearnings of the heart, and not expressions of the lips. A great man has truly said: "No matter what the attitude of the body may be, there are times when the soul is on its knees."

"Ain't you ready yet, Nell?" asked Violet, putting her head in at the door. "Do hurry, for we are waiting for you."

"I'm ready now," said Nelly, turning from the glass.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Violet, her quick eye detecting something wrong.

"Never mind," said Nelly, checking the word "nothing," which rose to her lips. "There is something wrong, Vi, but do n't ask any questions."

A night or two after, Nelly threw down her book at a little before ten, declaring she must have something to eat.

"Oh, get some pickles, do, "said Violet, starting up from the sofa where she had been having a nap.

"It is your duty to let us have a spread, mamma," said Nelly, "for I have been studying until I am actually faint."

"Remember when the dyspepsia comes on that I have warned you," said Mrs. Jackson, as her daughter lighted the lamp to go down cellar.

"Yes, mamma, you have done your duty," Nelly called back gaily.

The lunch was brought up and spread out on the table before the fire, when the street door slammed.

"There is George," exclaimed Violet. "This makes the third time he has broken the rules this week."

"He sha'n't have a mouthful of our spread," cried Nelly. "He doesn't deserve it, the way he goes on," and, darting to the door, Nelly whisked out into the hall, and confronted George just coming in.

"You can't go into the sitting-room," said she. "March right up-stairs. Boys that don't come in till after ten don't deserve any treat."

"What is going on?" demanded George, advancing to the door which Nelly guarded. "I'd like to see you make me go up-stairs before I'm ready."

"Why, George Arlington!" exclaimed Nelly, sniffing the air suspiciously, "you have been smoking."

"How do you know?" he demanded.

"You smell exactly like Griggs' store," said she disdainfully.

"What if I do?" said he boldly.

"You have been there smoking," said Nelly, holding her handkerchief before her little nose. "I should think you would be ashamed of yourself."

"What is there to be ashamed of?" he demanded. "My father smokes."

"He is not a boy eighteen years old," returned Nelly.

"I dare say he did smoke when he was eighteen," George declared; "so where is the harm in my doing it?"

"O George, you know you ought not to do it!" said Nelly. "What would Mr. Alden say? Mamma won't let you stay here if you go to Griggs' store, for she would n't let the young men that smoke and play cards there come here and spend the evening."

"Very well," said George coolly, "if I'm not fit to stay here I can go somewhere else."

"Now do n't get mad, George," coaxed Nelly. "You know I'm talking for your own good."

"If I'm to be lectured for my conduct," said George with dignity, "I prefer to have your mother do it."

"You can get mad if you want to," retorted Nelly, "but if I were you I would be ashamed to go to such a place as Griggs' store and smoke a pipe."

"Cigars; first quality, if you please, ma'am," said George, mischievously throwing open his coat and displaying half a dozen of the superior weed in his pocket.

"O George!" said Nelly in a tone of genuine regret.

It touched the boy more than he was willing to own, but, boy like, he was not going to confess that the sinking in the esteem of his girl friend gave his conscience sundry twinges; so taking out one of the cigars he bit the end off of it, saying mischievously:

"These are first-class. Just wait till I light one and you 'll see."

George never forgot the look with which Nelly turned away from him, saying: "If you smoke that in this house I 'll never think the same of you again."

"Hold on, Nelly," said George, the mischief dying out of his face. "I'm not going to smoke. Had n't an idea of doing it here. I was only teasing you for lecturing me; that 's all."

"I won't lecture you any more, George," said she, "but I wish you would make me a present of those cigars."

"What will you do with them?" he asked,—
"smoke 'em or give 'em to some poor duffer who
can 't afford to buy any?"

"No, I'll keep them as a pledge that you won't smoke any more."

"But I have n't made any such pledge."

"But won't you?" she coaxed. "You know you ought not to smoke just as well as I do, so please give them to me. I'll think ever so much more of you if you will."

"You don't know how the fellows would laugh at me," said George confidentially, "if I gave up smoking to please a girl."

"What fellows?" demanded Nelly. "Those horrid ones that go to Griggs' store?"

"Oh, I do n't care a rush for them," he declared quickly.

"Then whom are you afraid of?" asked Nelly, looking up into his face with clear eyes that made him color in spite of himself, though he replied impatiently:

"You must n't expect to be taken into my secrets, but I'm not the only boy in school that smokes, you'll find."

"I'd like to know who they are. I know Joe Allen does n't, nor Tom Parker, nor Ned Strong, and I do n't believe that Frank Farnsworth does," but the last name was spoken doubtfully, and George made no reply, for just then Violet burst open the door, exclaiming:

"Do, for pity sake, come in, Nelly Jackson. Do you expect me to be heroic enough to leave a pickle and a whole piece of pie for you? What are you doing—lecturing George for staying out after ten?"

George ran up-stairs without making a reply. Possibly he did not want the other girls to detect the odor Nelly had noticed so quickly. As for Nelly, she was so sober when she went back, that the other girls demanded to know what George had said to her to take away her appetite.

"Mamma," said she when the girls had gone up-stairs, "did you know that George smokes?"

"I did not know it," Mrs. Jackson replied, but I am not surprised."

"He has been to Griggs' store this evening, and showed me his pocket full of cigars. Is n't it dreadful?"

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Jackson. "I have been afraid all winter that George was getting into bad company."

"Is n't there something we can do?" asked Nelly anxiously.

"There is nothing we can do," replied her mother, "except keep our atmosphere pure and good."

"I gave him a good scolding when he came in to-night," declared Nelly, "but he did n't seem to care a bit."

"Scolding will do no good, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson. "Let him know that you do not approve of what he does, but do n't scold him."

"He deserves a good lecture sometimes," said Nelly, as though she rather enjoyed giving one to him.

"But George is a boy whom it does no good to scold," said her mother. "Use your influence to make him give up his cigars, but do not scold him for smoking; it will only make him worse." "Dear me, what a trial that boy is!" said Nelly, in a tone that made her mother smile quietly to herself.

"It is too late to discuss George's faults any longer, daughter," said she. "You must follow the girls' example and go to bed."

## CHAPTER X

## GEORGE'S LAST SCRAPE

THE play passed off on Washington's birth-day to every one's satisfaction, and the actors, greatly excited over their success, rashly promised to give a play every term for the good of the public.

The rehearsals over, the scholars had no time to lose, for they had to plunge at once into the examinations—those dreadful examinations on which their rank for the term depended. Mrs. Jackson began to question if Nelly in her ambition was not doing too much, for the constant strain made her nervous and cross, and her mother fancied she was growing thin and pale.

Violet took the examinations easily enough. She was not fitting herself to teach, and if her rank was poor her father would only laugh, and say it was all nonsense for a girl to study geometry and Latin, and Mrs. Arlington preferred that

her daughter should be a graceful dancer rather than a scholar.

George also found plenty of idle time, and when the familiar whistle was heard in the evening he would leave the girls gathered round the table with their books and join the dark figure waiting for him in the street.

"Where are you going to-night?" George asked one evening as usual.

"I say, Arlington," said Frank in a confidential tone, "want some fun?"

"Of course," replied George. "I'm always on hand if there is any fun going on. What is in the wind now?"

"Come on down street and I'll tell you," replied Frank. "I have thought of something to wake up this sleepy old town."

George's eyes began to twinkle. There is nothing a strong, healthy boy likes so much as an excitement. If things go smoothly for a couple of months; if nobody's house catches fire or horse runs away, he is stagnated, and feels the necessity of doing something to make a stir.

The first year he was at Exeter George was the ringleader in raising a false alarm of fire, which caused quite a panic in the hall where a lecture

was being given, and now, as Frank unfolded his plan in a low tone, as they walked down street together, he assented without a thought beyond what fun it would be.

George never considered consequences until it was too late to repair the mischief.

"Girls," said Mrs. Jackson as the clock struck nine, "you have studied long enough; do put up your books."

"Yes, mamma, in a minute," said Nelly, pausing with her pencil suspended over her paper.

"A minute means half an hour," said Violet impatiently. "I'm going to make you stop by singing that song you want to learn," and, seizing the banjo which had been one of her Christmas presents, Violet began to twang the strings vigorously.

"Do stop, for mercy's sake, Vi," said Mary impatiently. "How do you expect us to think with that noise going on?"

"I do n't want you to think," retorted Violet.

"If you and Nell do n't stop thinking you will have softening of the brain. Learned people always have some frivolous person round to amuse them when their great minds become fevered from too much thought, so you and Nell

can let your humble servant serve you in that capacity."

Mary stuffed her fingers in her ears as she bent over her books, but Nelly forgot her studies in the fascination of the banjo which she was learning to play under Violet's instruction.

"How does it go?' she asked, watching Violet's fingers.

"Notice which frets I use," replied Violet "Watch close and you will be able to do it."

Nelly perched herself on the arm of Violet's chair to take this unscientific music-lesson, and the two heads, the black and the brown, were bent close together, when a bell, sounding startlingly loud and clear in the still evening air, began to ring furiously.

"Oh, my goodness me!" cried Nelly. "What is that bell ringing for at this time of night?"

"There is a fire somewhere," exclaimed Violet, her eyes shining with excitement.

"O mamma!" cried Nelly, "do you suppose this house is on fire? Mrs. Gibbs will keep the matches close to the cook-stove."

"The house could hardly be on fire so as to raise an alarm without our knowing it," said Mrs. Jackson, calmly, "and, as there is no fire in the

stove, Mrs. Gibbs' matches can hardly do any mischief to-night."

"Let us go outdoors," said Violet excitedly, "perhaps we can see it."

"Put something over you, girls," said Mrs. Jackson, and hastily catching up some wraps they ran eagerly to the door.

The streets were full of people running in one direction, while all the bells rang at once, and the one fire-engine clanged furiously as they hurried it along to the scene of the excitement.

"Dear me!" said Nelly, "there has n't been such an excitement since Cleveland was elected."

"See how light it is over there," said Violet. "What do you suppose is burning?"

"Some of those men might stop long enough to tell us," said Mary. "We are unprotected females and they ought to take pity on our helpless condition."

"I wish I was a boy and could seize the waterpail and run down street shouting 'Fire!'" said Nelly, fairly dancing with excitement and cold.

"Won't you please tell us where the fire is?" asked Mary, as one dark figure passed more leisurely than the rest.

"It's the fern-factory," he replied. "Might as well let it go; 't ain't worth saving."

"Come up here, girls," called Mrs. Jackson from the interior. "We can get a fine view of the fire from the attic windows."

The girls obeyed, and, trooping up the narrow stairs, gathered round the window, from which they could see the great blaze leaping into the sky.

Ten years before, a stranger had come to Exeter and told the people that they possessed untold wealth growing wild upon their hills, in the shape of sweet-fern, which could be converted into an extract which was in great demand for tanning leather. Exeter had not done anything in the way of business for years, the people living on their incomes, but they thought it would be a good thing to turn the sweet-fern, which grew in such abundance, into a good selling commodity, and also give employment to the young men who were leaving the town as soon as they were old enough to engage in business elsewhere. So they put their money into the stranger's enterprise, built a factory, and made up a lot of the extract, but instead of meeting with a large demand as the stranger had promised, the dismayed owners found they had a useless article on their

hands which they could not even give away. For ten years the building had stood idle and useless, and now it was in a blaze and would soon be reduced to ashes.

"Is n't it glorious?" said Nelly. "I can enjoy it because I know no one's house is burning down; I like a little excitement when it does no harm."

"That reminds me of the time you cried because I would not let you go to a fire," laughed her mother, "and you wished our house would burn so that you could see it."

"How do you suppose it caught fire?" said Mary.

"I can't imagine," replied Mrs. Jackson, "unless some one was in there smoking, and I should think it was too cold for that."

"I remember when I was a little girl," said Nelly, "they used to scare me into fits by telling me there was a tramp staying there. I would n't go by there after dark."

"Oh, see!" cried Violet. "How it is blazing up."

"It has caught in a new place," said Mrs. Jackson. "The roof will fall in soon."

"Pity they did n't think to set it afire when

Cleveland was elected," said Nelly, "it would have made such a show."

"Why they would n't dare to," said Mary. "It is property, if it is worthless."

"They might as well burn it up," said Nelly, "it is n't doing any good."

"I wonder if some one did set it afire?" said Effie Lamb.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Jackson. "I do n't think any one would dare do that."

"They would take them up for destroying the building: that is all there is left of it now, for the machinery has all been taken out."

"I do n't know what object one could have for setting it on fire," said Mrs. Jackson. "If any one did it, it would be for mischief, and I do n't think any one would quite dare do that. See, girls, the roof has fallen in."

A splendid blaze mounted up into the sky, causing the watchers to hold their breath for a moment, the spectacle was so awful and grand; then slowly it settled down into a steady blaze, eating up all that was left of the factory which had once been the hope of the village.

"We had better go down now, girls," said Mrs. Jackson. "You will get cold, I'm afraid." "I wonder where George is?" said Violet, as they gathered round the fire in the south room.

"He is at the fire, of course," said Nelly, "and won't leave until the last spark is out. I wish I was a boy and could go to fires, run after street-parades, attend political rallies and all the other nice exciting things."

"It is too bad you are not," laughed Violet, "for then you could accept papa's offer. Did you know, Mother Jackson, that papa said that if Nell was a boy he would give her a place in the granite works?"

"He was very kind," said Mrs. Jackson, smiling at her daughter curled up on the rug before the fire, "but I wouldn't have my girl a boy if I could."

"Oh, think what I could do!" said Nelly. "Mr. Arlington would give me a place on the works, and some day I would be agent or something, and build a little cottage for you, where we would live in luxury. Then Violet would fall desperately in love with me, and her father would say: 'I will give you my daughter, Orlando, (I think mamma would have called me Orlando if I had been a boy) as a token of the esteem with which I regard you."

"You talk as though I did all the falling in love," pouted Violet, "and told papa I wanted to marry you."

"Oh, no," said Nelly, "if I was a boy you would be the girl I should choose, but I would n't dare propose, but would win your heart by my silent devotion. Do n't you wish I was a boy, Vi?"

"No," declared Violet. "I would much rather you would stay a girl."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to," sighed Nelly. "Never mind, I will show the world I can do something."

"The thing for you to do now is go to bed," said Mrs. Jackson; "it is very late."

"Can 't we sit up till George comes, to hear about the fire?" pleaded Nelly.

"No," said Mrs. Jackson. "George will be late. You must go now or you won't be ready to get up to-morrow morning when the clock strikes six."

"It is so hard to get up at six o'clock in the morning. I move we make a change and get up at six o'clock at night," said Nelly, putting her arms round her knees as she still sat on the rug before the fire.

"Come, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson, and this time the girl knew she must obey.

Before they went to their rooms the girls climbed up into the attic to look once more at the fire which was dying down. While they were there they heard the street door slam.

"There is George," cried Nelly. "Let us hear what he says."

The girls followed her down the two flights of stairs and back into the south room where George had gone to get warm.

"O George," Nelly exclaimed, "have you been to the fire?"

"Oh, no," he replied, "Frank and I were so busy studying we did n't know anything about it."

"What a story!" pouted Violet. "Of course you were there. How did it get on fire? Was it set?"

"Deacon Brown set it on fire to get the insurance," said George coolly.

"You ought to be ashamed to tell such stories, George Arlington," said Nelly severely. "We happen to know enough not to believe them, for they can't get such buildings as that insured."

"Did they try to put it out," asked Violet, "or just let it burn?"

"They got out the engine and played on the other buildings so that they would n't catch," George replied. "It was a jolly little excitement. You ought to have seen Deacon Brown and the other owners standing round with their hands in their pockets scowling at the fire. When we came racing along with the fire engine, Deacon Brown said: 'Let it burn, boys; let it burn if it wants to, that is all it's good for!' I have n't had such fun since I 've been in Exeter. What did you girls do when you heard the alarm?"

"Vi and I were practising on the banjo," said Nelly, "and when the bell rang I jumped nearly to the ceiling. Honestly, I think I did jump nearly a foot," she added gravely, trying to estimate the exact extent of the excited start she had given.

"I thought you would leave off studying for a while," said George with a chuckle. "Did Mary stop long enough to look at it?"

"We were all through studying," said Nelly. "Whoever set it was kind enough to wait until we had time to watch it. Why, George Arlington, you are all wet! Look, mamma, he is beginning to steam," and she pointed to George's clothes which the fire was drying off.

"Where have you been, George?" asked Mrs. Jackson in surprise.

"Did you get afire and have to be put out?" demanded his sister.

"I went into the river to help pump the engine, that's all," said he indifferently.

"You must get your wet clothes off at once. And, girls, look at that clock! You must go to bed."

"Never mind," said Nelly easily, "we do n't have a fire every night. Can 't we make George some ginger tea? Vi can hold him while I pour it down."

"I do n't need any help in doctoring George," said Mrs. Jackson smiling. "Go up-stairs or I shall have to treat you the way I used to when you were a little girl; punish you for not minding."

"We are going," said Nelly, vanishing at this threat. "Good-night, mamma."

The next morning at school the fire was the principal topic of conversation. It had been so long since anything of an exciting nature had taken place in Exeter that the young people thought it an event of great importance.

"Only think," said Maud impressively, "papa thinks some one set it on fire on purpose."

"What did they do it for?" Nelly demanded.

"Mischief," Maud replied. "Papa says there are a lot of lawless boys in town, and he hopes that if they find out who set the fire they will make an example of them."

"How will they do that?" asked Violet.

"Put them in jail, I suppose," said Maud, as the bell rang and the scholars went to their seats.

After prayers Mr. Alden, instead of calling for the usual recitations, stood behind his desk looking gravely down into the young faces before him. It was evident that the school was going to get a lecture, but that was nothing unusual, and the scholars thought nothing of it as Mr. Alden began to say with what respect and esteem he regarded his pupils, and how it grieved him to learn that any of his school were undeserving the feeling he had for them.

The scholars accused Mr. Alden of liking the sound of his own round periods so well that he talked twice as much as was necessary, but this morning he acted as though he dreaded coming to the point of what he had to say, and put it off as long as he could, running his eyes over the

faces before him as if searching for some excuse for not speaking about the matter at all.

Nelly took a piece of paper out of her desk, and, with her ever-ready pencil, began to draw her teacher's outline. She was not interested in what Mr. Alden had to say: some of the scholars had been breaking the rules too freely, she supposed. The chemistry class had been rather hilarious lately while trying their experiments up in the laboratory, and unlucky Ned Strong, who, like Tommy Traddles, was always getting into scrapes, had sent a snowball through the reading-room window the day before. Either of these might be the subject of Mr. Alden's lecture; he would get to it in time.

Nelly was only half listening when a word arrested her pencil. What was he saying about the factory? Some of the students of Exeter Academy accused of setting it on fire? Why, it was too absurd to be true. Mr. Alden did not want to believe it, in fact, he said he should not believe it unless he was obliged to, for he considered his scholars gentlemen, and surely no gentleman would be guilty of such an act.

When Mr. Alden finished speaking the school was so still a pin could have been heard falling

to the floor. The scholars exchanged surprised glances, but a breathless excitement kept them still.

"This is a grave offense with which you are charged, gentlemen," Mr. Alden continued, "and if it is proved that any of you are guilty of it I shall feel that it merits the very highest punishment this school ever decrees; but I hope you will be proved innocent. For myself I do not yet believe it, but I wish you to understand that I put you on your honor, and to prove that you are not in any way guilty of what occurred last night, I will ask any one who knows anything about the fire to rise."

No one stirred, and the silence was deeper than ever. The boys were all more or less excited. Joe Allen's face was so flushed and troubled that a stranger might have thought him the guilty one; but Joe's character was too well known in Exeter for any one to have any suspicions of his having anything to do with the fire. George sat half turned round in his seat, one arm hanging over the back, so that no one could see his face. Frank Farnsworth ran his eye in a critical way over the boys' faces as if searching for a guilty one, then looked up to Mr. Alden as much as to say:

"What do you think of this, sir? It looks very mysterious to me."

"You must remember, boys," said Mr. Alden gravely, "that this affair will not be hushed up. Several had their suspicions aroused last night, and they will search this to the bottom. If the guilty one proves to be in this school, and keeps his seat after the question I have just asked he will be proved to be a coward and liar as well as an incendiary."

The words were hardly out of Mr. Alden's mouth before George Arlington sprang to his feet and throwing up his head looked defiantly at his teacher. An electric shock went through the school at the boy's action, and the scholars looked eagerly from George to Mr. Alden. The latter could not speak at first, and for a moment teacher and pupil faced each other in silence.

"Well, Arlington," said Mr. Alden at length, have you anything to tell us about the fire?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy without flinching. "I planned the whole thing."

"Who helped you?" asked Mr. Alden.

"That I'm not obliged to say," replied George. "I'll tell you all I did if you want to know."



"I PLANNED THE WHOLE THING."



"You are right," said Mr. Alden, after a slight pause. "I do not ask you to betray any one else. I will see you after school. You may take your seat."

George obeyed, and Mr. Alden tapped the bell for the first recitation, but the scholars were too excited to study. Mr. Alden also apeared pre-occupied, and the morning seemed to drag out twice its usual length to both teachers and pupils.

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## CHAPTER XI

## SUDDEN CHANGES

MAMMA! mamma! Where are you?"
Nelly threw her books down in the hall,
and rushed through the dining-room into the
kitchen where Mrs. Jackson was peeling potatoes
for dinner.

"Oh, mamma!" she cried breathlessly, "what do they do to incendiaries?"

"What are you talking about, Nelly?" asked Mrs. Jackson, looking at her daughter's flushed face in surprise.

"What do they do with incendiaries?" repeated Nelly, "Will they put any one in jail for setting the fern factory on fire?"

"I do n't know, I 'm sure," replied Mrs. Jackson. "They do n't know yet that it was set on fire."

"Yes, they do," said Nelly. "George confessed before the whole school this morning. Oh, it was dreadful! But it was just splendid in him."

"You do n't know what you are talking about, Nelly," said her mother gravely. "Do tell me plainly, if you can, what you mean. Did George have anything to do with setting the factory on fire?"

"Yes, he did," said Nelly, and in a few words set before her mother all that had occurred in school that morning.

Mrs. Jackson looked very grave, and Mrs. Gibbs, who was frying meat over the stove, broke out indignantly:

"It's no more than you can expect from that young scamp of an Arlington. I ain't an atom surprised. Mankind are just alike; always bringing disgrace on themselves and their women-folks."

"Will they send him to jail, mamma!" asked Nelly anxiously. "Maud's father said that if they found out who did it they would make an example of them."

"I hope they won't be so hard on George as that," said Mrs. Jackson; "but he does deserves some punishment."

"Jail is too good for him," declared Mrs. Gibbs, but she applied the corner of her apron to her eye as she opened the oven-door to inspect the boy's favorite pudding.

"Is n't it awful?" said Nelly, turning pale. "I knew he would do something dreadful when I saw those cigars in his pocket."

"This may teach him a lesson, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson. "Take off your things now and go and set the table."

It did not seem to Nelly as though things ought to go on just the same when George was in such disgrace and trouble, but the girls came in hungry and as eager for dinner as usual, and she had to perform all her regular duties, in spite of the cloud that hung over the household.

George did not make his appearance, and Violet reported that he was closeted with Mr. Alden. She was more angry than troubled over her brother's disgrace. George ought to know better than do such things, she declared. Her father would give him a terrible lecture, and her grandfather would threaten all sorts of things: but Mrs. Jackson thought George needed something besides threats and lectures. If the good in the boy's nature did not prevail, she did not know what would become of him, and trembled as she thought of his future. It was well for George that he had Mrs. Jackson's prayers at

that time of his life, for his own mother did not send up one petition for her boy.

George did not come home until two o'clock, and then he went directly to his own room.

Mrs. Jackson hardly knew what to do, but her motherly heart reminded her that he had had no dinner. He must be fed, so going down-stairs she found Mrs. Gibbs, who was blacking the stove as if attacking a mortal enemy. On the table was a tray with a tempting meal spread upon it.

"I took that up to that young scamp of an Arlington," said she, rattling the stove-covers vindictively, "but he would n't let me in. He do n't deserve a mouthful, but he 's paying four dollars a week for his board and expects his meals regular."

Mrs. Jackson smiled, but made no comment, thinking that repentance and fasting might be good for the prodigal.

About three o'clock there came a knock at Mrs. Jackson's door and George came in, bearing but little resemblance to the repentant prodigal, and looking as though he was determined not to show feeling of any kind.

"Mr. Alden has expelled me," said he briefly.

"I am going home to-morrow. How much do I owe you?"

"My dear boy, I'm so sorry," said Mrs. Jackson, laying her hand on his arm and looking earnestly in his face.

"It is no more than I deserve," said George, throwing up his head defiantly. "If I was n't my father's son they would march me off to jail, I suppose; but they respect him, so I 'm only requested to leave. I 'm not fit to go to school any longer; I 'll corrupt the innocent young lambs there with my evil influence."

"George," said Mrs. Jackson gravely, "how long are you going to let this go on?"

"What do you mean?"

"How long are you going to let evil have the upper hand of you? When are you going to begin to overcome these temptations, instead of letting them overcome you?"

"I do try to behave myself," said the boy soberly. "I make no end of resolutions, but I can't keep them for the life of me."

"Because you try in your own strength," said Mrs. Jackson quickly. "Keep on making resolutions, but ask God to help you keep them."

"I can 't do it," the boy replied. "I can 't

seem to get hold of the right sort of feeling. You'll have to let me go, Mother Jackson. I'm bound to go wrong."

"Do n't say that, George," said Mrs. Jackson gravely. "No one is bound to go wrong. It is a duty you owe yourself and God to go right. I wish you would promise me to try, not in your own strength, but with God's help, to do better."

"I can't," George replied. "I have broken too many resolutions to promise anything."

"What will you do when you go away from here?" asked Mrs. Jackson, anxiously.

"I don't know," George replied gloomily. "Like as not, father will set me to work in the quarry. He will think that is all I am good for, since I can 't keep straight at school."

"It is no disgrace to work with your hands. If your father puts you in the quarry, work for him faithfully and well, and he will soon come to respect you."

George listened soberly, for, though he would not have owned it to a soul, he dreaded going home and facing his father after his disgrace. He felt it keenly, and nothing would have tempted him to face his schoolmates, so he spent the afternoon packing, trying to whistle indifferently whenever any one passed his door. He even refused to go down to supper, for he could not bring himself to meet the girls, who came home greatly excited over the affair. Violet was especially indignant.

"Mr. Alden had no right to expel him for such a harmless bit of fun," said she. "The old factory was n't good for anything, anyway."

"Mr. Alden said it was n't that alone," Mary replied; "but his continual breaking of the rules and the company he keeps. You know that he smokes and plays cards at Griggs' store."

"What if he does?" Violet retorted. "Papa says all boys have to sow their wild oats. I won't go to their horrid old academy another day; I'll go home with George to-morrow," and, true to her resolve, Violet began to pack up her things at once.

Nelly was very much cast down by these events. It was dreadful to have George and Violet leave them in this way, and not come back; for Violet declared Exeter Academy would see her no more. She was going to New York to school. And George! what would become of him? To be expelled was the deepest disgrace these young people thought could befall any one, and

Nelly felt it as keenly as though George were her brother as well as Violet's, and wished that she too could go away and not enter Exeter Academy again.

It was all very well to shut himself up in his room and refuse all intercourse with the world, but George found that in spite of his tragic position he was hungry, and about half-past seven he took his lamp and stealing down the back stairs, paid a visit to the cellar.

He was just coming up into the kitchen with a piece of mince pie and a generous supply of doughnuts when he encountered Nelly at the sink filling a glass with water. He threw back his head expecting a scornful address from the young woman, but instead she asked sympathetically:

"Oh, George, why didn't you come down to supper?"

"I did n't have much appetite then," he replied, "but a fellow can't starve if he is expelled."

"Oh, George, was n't it dreadful!" said Nelly, tragically. "Do sit down by the stove and eat something, it will make you feel better."

The disgraced hero found Nelly's tone very

comforting, and sitting down in Mrs. Gibbs' old rocking-chair, he found his interest in life reviving as he took generous mouthfuls of mince pie.

"I expected you to blow me sky-high," said he, "after what I have done."

"It was horrid of you, George," said Nelly soberly. "What ever made you do it?"

"I thought it would be fun," he confessed. "You see, Nell, I never stop to think of consequences, till the day after the circus. If I had dreamed of Mr. Alden's coming down on me like a thousand of bricks, you bet I would n't have touched a match to the thing."

"How did they find you out?" asked Nelly curiously.

"Oh, they saw me. I did n't think of borrowing some one else's hat and coat, and rigging up so that no one would know me."

"So the others were disguised," said Nelly with curling lip.

"They didn't get caught," said George.
"I'm always the unlucky one. I suppose it is my fate to get caught in every scrape I get into," and George took a philosophical bite out of his third doughnut.

"I don't think it right for them to go free and you have to bear all the blame," said Nelly indignantly.

"Some fellows are always lucky; I wish I was one of that kind."

"I do n't know," said Nelly; "I think I like you better for owning up."

"I say, Nell," said George, brightening, "you are a frump. I expected you'd be down on me; did n't know as you'd speak to me again."

"I am down on you, George," said Nelly severely. "It was a dreadful thing to do, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Well, I am," said George shortly. "What do you suppose I went without my supper for?"

"O George!" said Nelly in despair, "I knew you would do something bad when I saw those cigars in your pocket. It is all because you went to Griggs' store and got into such bad company; Mr. Alden said so."

"Lots he knows about the company I keep," muttered George.

"But if you had n't yielded to the first temptations," Nelly persisted, "you might have resisted this one of setting the mill on fire."

George made no reply, but ate his last dough-

nut in silence, then, opening his coat, took half a dozen cigars out of his breast pocket, and handed them to Nelly, saying gravely:

"Want those for a parting keepsake, Nell?"

"O George, do you really mean that you won't smoke any more?"

"I won't make any promises," said he gravely, "for my word is not good for much, but I do mean to try and turn over a new leaf. Keep the cigars. It will help me to refuse to smoke if I know you have them."

"I will keep them always," said Nelly eagerly.

'You could n't give me anything that would please me more."

George went back up-stairs refreshed in his inner man, and a good deal comforted in spirit by the thought that Nelly did not despise him for being expelled.

As he entered his room Violet met him at the door and nearly smothered him by throwing both arms round his neck, exclaiming: "You poor, dear boy! it is just as mean as it can be the way you have been treated. I won't go to that horrid old Exeter Academy another day. I'm going home with you to-morrow."

George was both touched and comforted by his

sister's devotion, but of course it was beneath his manly dignity to say so, so he only patted her on the back, telling her to be a good girl and not make a fuss, but he felt a good deal better knowing that Violet was going home too. His mother, like Violet, would think he was abused; his father would scold him first, and forgive him afterwards, and then away from Exeter, where every one knew of his disgrace, new prospects would open before him, and this would soon be forgotten; so when he bade them good-bye in the morning he was in almost as good spirits as usual. But the lesson he had learned was not forgotten, but had a more lasting effect than if he had left Exeter Academy with all the honors of a successful graduation.

The house seemed empty and silent without George and Violet, and Nelly looked forward with dread to the vacation when the others would leave and she would be left alone. Mary was not coming back, and next term the house would be filled with newcomers, whom Nelly was sure could never fill the places of the old scholars.

Of course Violet and Nelly had exchanged vows of eternal friendship, and promised to exchange letters every week. At first the letters came regularly, but Violet was not much of a correspondent; her letters never told half of what Nelly wanted to know, and when she began to get ready for her new fashionable school in New York, her letters ceased altogether; so before six months passed the Arlingtons had dropped entirely out of Nelly's life. The last she and her mother heard of them Violet was in New York with her mother, and George was about to enter college. Mrs. Arlington would not allow her husband to set George at work in the quarry as he had threatened, and Mrs. Jackson often wondered how the boy met the temptations of his new life, and in all the years which followed never forgot him.

A few evenings after the Arlingtons went away Joe Allen called at the Jackson house. Nelly received him, for Mary and the Lamb girls were out, and Mrs. Jackson was up-stairs.

It was very hard to entertain Joe, for he was very bashful and not a fluent talker. He crossed and recrossed his legs; fidgeted in his chair, and did not know what to do with his hands and arms.

Nelly racked her brain for subjects of conversation, but when the weather, the examinations, the Christian Endeavor Society, and the new scholars likely to come the next term were exhausted, Nelly could not think of a single remark to make next. The more she reflected the blanker her mind became, until Joe came to her aid by starting a new topic, all on his own responsibility.

"If a fellow knows something about another fellow that ought to be told, has he any right to hold his tongue?"

"Why, Joe Allen! What do you mean?" asked Nelly in surprise.

"I have been in a puzzle all the week," said Joe, nervously recrossing his legs. "I know something, but I do n't know whether I ought to tell it or not."

"Why, Joe, what is it?" cried Nelly, her curiosity fairly aroused.

"I know something that would get another fellow into a scrape," said Joe, slowly, "and I do n't know whether I ought to shield him or not."

"Oh, Joe, do tell me all about it," pleaded Nelly, for slow, quiet, exact Joe almost drove quick, impulsive Nelly wild.

"I thought I would speak to you and see what you thought about it."

"Yes, what is it?" said Nelly breathlessly.

"Frank Farnsworth was the ringleader in setting the factory afire, and coaxed George into it. In fact he is as much to blame as George for all the scrapes. He furnished the horse to carry the seats down to the Salvation Army barracks, last term. He took George to Griggs' store, and taught him to smoke."

"And George never said one word!" exclaimed Nelly.

"No, and Frank is so sly no one ever suspects him. George is right out-and-out in what he does."

"That is what he meant," said Nelly suddenly.

"He told me that some of the boys were disguised at the fire so they were n't recognized."

"Yes," said Joe, "Frank had a complete disguise that he slipped into, but George did n't think of that; he did n't half try to hide."

"I do n't see why he shielded Frank," said Nelly indignantly. "I would n't have, but then, boys are always more loyal to each other than girls."

"Frank was n't loyal," declared Joe. "He told on George. He was afraid he might be suspected, so shifted all the blame onto George."

"The mean, hateful thing!" cried Nelly. "I

hope you are not going to shield him any longer. I'll tell if you do n't."

"I hate to tell," said Joe. "A fellow feels so mean turning informer."

"I'll tell if you do n't," Nelly declared.

"It won't do to have a girl mixed up in it," said Joe decidedly. "I own I hate to see Frank holding up his head when he ought to be hanging it with shame."

"O Joe! you must tell," said Nelly eagerly. "Wait; I'm going to see what mamma says," and flying up-stairs Nelly burst in on her mother, who was quietly looking over the clothes from the wash.

"Mamma," cried Nelly, "do come down-stairs and overcome Joe Allen's ridiculous, nonsensical, conscientious scruples."

"Why Nelly, what do you mean?" said Mrs. Jackson, who could not get used to Nelly's jumping into the midst of things.

"Do come down-stairs and hear what Joe says," said Nelly, seizing her mother by the arm. "He won't tell till he is convinced he ought to, and you must convince him."

Knowing it was useless to expect Nelly to explain anything when she was excited Mrs. Jackson followed her down into the south room.

"Good evening, Joe," said she. "Nelly has dragged me down here to settle some question. What is it?"

"Now tell her, Joe," ordered Nelly; "she will know what is right better than you and I."

Joe repeated his story, to which Mrs. Jackson listened in silence. She was not surprised, for she had long suspected that Frank exerted an evil influence over George. She did not tell the young people so, however, but when Joe finished said decidedly:

"Disagreeable as it is, Joe, I think you ought to tell Mr. Alden; for, instead of being dishonorable to tell, it is wrong to shield Frank when he deserves punishment. You may do Frank a favor, for it will do the boy more harm to practice deceit than to be openly punished."

"I thought of that," said Joe soberly. "I suppose it would really."

"Then you'll tell, won't you, Joe?" said Nelly eagerly, as she stood by her mother's chair.

"Yes, I will," said Joe, buttoning up his coat with an air of resolution.

Neither Nelly nor her mother thought of asking Joe for proofs of his statements. His word was enough for every one who knew him, for he never brought charges against any one unless he was absolutely sure of the facts.

In a few days another scholar was expelled from Exeter Academy on account of very grave charges which were brought against him, and this caused a greater excitement than when George Arlington set the fern factory on fire.

Every one was ready to believe anything about George, but when Frank Farnsworth was expelled the town rang with indignation, for he was such a good boy, so regular in his attendance at church and Sunday-school, many believed the stories to be lies maliciously told about him. Frank, himself, put on an air of injured innocence, was more virtuous than ever, so that the older people declared it to be a shame to tell lies about such a good boy as Frank Farnsworth.

He left town very shortly to pursue his studies elsewhere, and as he entered a medical school a few years after, his native town saw but little of him.

Joe's name did not appear in the affair, but Frank knew who had told on him, as he expressed it, and cherished a spite against him forever after; never quite giving up the idea of some day being able to pay him off for what he had done.

## CHAPTER XII

# MR. WINTERBOURN'S BOARDER

DEDHAM had come to understand the meaning of hard times. It had been a flourishing manufacturing town, but the factories had suddenly been shut down, for the simple reason that they were not making anything, and hence the company could not afford to keep them running.

Hundreds of people were turned out of employment, and benevolent men and women anxiously asked each other what would become of them without work; for want brings on crime, and it was a dangerous thing for the community—these desperate men and women left without any means of maintenance. But the company did not trouble themselves about that; they could not be expected to run a lot of mills that paid them nothing.

The winter following the closing of the mills 176

was a dark one in Dedham. It was usually a gay, lively place, but the hard times affected even the pleasures, and the young people complained that there was nothing going on, nor any fun to be had. Merchants trembled for their business, for there was no money, and every one who could moved away, like rats leaving a doomed ship; for unless business came up Dedham would be a wreck.

Business did come up. The next fall the mills commenced operations once more. Dedham felt like ringing its bells and ordering out its cannon when it heard the hum of machinery, and the piercing whistle once more told busy housewives that it was twelve o'clock, and the men would soon be home to dinner.

The mills had changed owners; that was all the people knew, though various rumors floated about that were believed by some and denied by others; but it was a glorious fact that the mills were running; the hands were employed at the good wages of the old days. There were no more miserable cut-downs, no more screwing men and women down to get as much work out of them as possible for the least amount of money.

If any one knew the real owner of the mills it was Mr. Winterbourn, the general superintendent, who rubbed his hands with delight as he went through the busy rooms filled with the whir and buzz of machinery. But Mr. Winterbourn kept his own counsel and betrayed no one's confidence.

As soon as the mills resumed operations a number of people moved into town, not only men and women who wanted work, but people who were attracted to the place as a town that was coming up. A new doctor came, and hung his shingle almost opposite the office of old Dr. Thornton who had looked after the ailments of the people of Dedham for the last thirty years. He immediately began to make himself popular. This was no very difficult task, for he was a handsome young man with a very winning manner which took with the old ladies, who told him their woes, fully assured that he would make them all over new.

Another change was in the faculty of the highschool. The citizens were very proud of this institution, and always pointed out the handsome brick building to strangers as one of the objects of interest in the town. The new principal and his assistant came very highly recommended from their different institutions of learning. The principal was a young man who bore the several letters affixed to his name with becoming modesty, and the young lady assistant was supposed to be mistress of several languages, and have the popular accomplishments of music and drawing at her finger-ends.

If one wanted to know what was going on in town they had only to go to the house of Miss Augusta Stone, who followed dressmaking for her living. Miss Augusta scorned gossip, and would not be guilty of such a vice; she only repeated what she heard, and, of course, she heard a great deal, for every one patronized her, from Mrs. Eugene Buckman, the acknowledged leader of society, to the girls who worked in the mills. If there is a time in a woman's life when she is confidential it is when she is having a dress made, so Miss Augusta was made acquainted with several items of interest concerning her customers, and, if she repeated them, what harm was there done?

Miss Stone owned a large square house on Main Street, but occupied only the rooms on one side of the hall. The one facing the street was fitted up very handsomely for a reception-room, with an imitation tapestry carpet, plush chairs, and a brilliant picture or two in large gilt frames which she kept covered with mosquito-netting to protect them from the dust and flies. Behind this was the sewing-room, off of which was her bedroom, and in the ell was a tiny kitchen where she prepared her solitary meals.

One afternoon Miss Sibyl Winterbourn put on her most stylish street suit, and walked down to Miss Stone's to have her heliotrope ladies'-cloth fitted. Miss Sibyl was a handsome young lady with dark hair and eyes, and a brilliant coloring which she set off with a most appropriate wardrobe.

Miss Augusta was ready to keep her engagement, and was soon down on her knees, hanging the straight plain skirt, while Miss Sibyl surveyed her graceful figure in the long mirror with extreme satisfaction.

"I hear you are going to have a tenant in the other half of your house," said Miss Sibyl, raising her left arm slightly so as to obtain a better view of her skirt.

"Yes," said Miss Stone, removing several pins from her mouth, "the new high-school assistant wants to keep house, and I thought I might as well let her have the rooms. I never use 'em, and if they bring me in something so much the better."

"Is she going to live alone?" asked Miss Sibyl.

"No, she expects her mother and wants everything ready when she gets here. There, how do you like that? Does it hang all right?" and Miss Augusta rose to observe the effect as Sibyl walked slowly up and down before the glass.

"Do n't you think it hitches up a trifle on the left side and is too full in front?" asked the young lady.

Miss Winterbourn was very hard to suit, but as she was a good customer Miss Augusta went obediently down on her knees again and began to remedy the imaginary defects.

"Has she moved in yet?" asked Sibyl, referring to the former subject of conversation.

"Oh, dear, no," Miss Augusta replied; "but she is here every day after school, putting up pictures and things, and yesterday she had a woman putting down carpets."

"There, that is better," said Sibyl, surveying Miss Augusta's work approvingly. "When can I have this?"

"I can 't get it done before the last of next week possibly," said Miss Augusta impressively.

"I want it for the concert. I have an invitation, and have set my heart on having this dress to wear."

"What night is the concert?" asked Miss Stone thoughtfully.

"Thursday."

"Well, perhaps I can get it done by that time. I expect another girl to sew for me next week."

"Do try your best," said Sibyl, "for I sha' n't enjoy it half so much if I do n't have this dress."

"I will have it done," promised Miss Stone.
"Who cut that waist for you, Sibyl?"

"That new dressmaker, Mina Edwards."

"It is a wretched fit," said Miss Augusta, surveying the pretty silk waist with great disfavor.

"I know it," the young lady replied, "but I was in a great hurry for it, for I wanted it to wear to the agricultural fair. You were so busy you could n't do it, Mrs. Danton had work engaged ahead, so I took it to Miss Edwards."

"She has just spoiled it," Miss Augusta declared. "It is too large in the neck, and the sleeves are not gathered in right at all." "I only wear it under my coat," said Sibyl, who had n't noticed these glaring defects until Miss Augusta pointed them out to her, and shall be sure and not employ her again. Remember, I shall expect my dress in time for Thursday evening."

Miss Augusta solemnly renewed her vows, and she and her customer parted on the best of terms.

Mr. Winterbourn was a widower. Ten years before, when his wife died, his oldest sister had come to console him for his loss, and had remained ever since to keep house for him, for, as the good lady repeatedly asserted, Sibyl was good for nothing in that line. She could play the piano and sing Italian songs, but as for getting a dinner or making a loaf of bread she was no more good than a child of six.

A few days before Mr. Winterbourn had told his sister and daughter that he expected an addition to the family in the person of a young man who was coming to the mills to fill the position of timekeeper. Sibyl did not know what to make of this, for they had never taken a boarder before, and this evening she followed her father to the library where he went after supper to have a smoke. Sibyl drew a chair up to the fire opposite her father, saying;

"What possessed you to bring that young timekeeper here to board?"

"Be careful how you look down on that time-keeper," replied Mr. Winterbourn. "I have a reason for bringing him here, as you ought to know. I want you to treat him in your very best style, and make as much of him as you do of that young quack of a doctor."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Sibyl in surprise.

"Can you keep a secret, Sibyl?" asked her father.

"You ought to know that I am enough like you to be able to do that," she replied, becoming more and more interested as her curiosity was roused.

"Yes, you are my own daughter for that," said Mr. Winterbourn, with a chuckle. "But, mind, if I tell you this secret you are not to give a hint of it to a soul."

"You can trust me," said Sibyl proudly. "I can keep a secret if I am a woman."

"I believe you can," replied her father, "and I am going to tell you this one. This time-keeper who is coming here to board is the man who bought up the company."

"Why, father, what do you mean?" exclaimed Sibyl.

"You know the company failed," began Mr. Winterbourn.

"I knew that to my sorrow last winter," said Sibyl, with a slight shudder.

"Indeed you did!" said her father emphatically. "To tell the truth, the business would have gone up entirely and this place gone to the dogs if this young booby had n't come along, bought out the company, and set the mills to running."

"But who and what is he?" asked Sibyl, more and more puzzled.

"I do n't know whether he is a fool or a speculator," replied her father calmly, "but I shall find out when he gets here."

"He must be rich to buy up a business like this," said Sibyl.

"Oh, yes, some relative, an uncle or grandfather, made him his heir, then kindly took himself out of the way, so that he has got all the money."

"And he has invested in a worthless business like this? He must be a fool," Miss Sibyl said, stating her opinion as calmly as her father.

"We will soon find out," said Mr. Winterbourn. "Anyway, he is rich enough to be worth taking some trouble for."

"I sha' n't put myself out for a fellow who does n't know any better than to invest in a business that won't pay him a cent," said Sibyl coolly.

"He has made it very nice for us," Mr. Winterbourn declared. "Things looked pretty blue when the mills shut down."

"He may shut them down again when he finds there is no profit in them," said Sibyl thoughtfully.

"That is what I am afraid of," replied her father. "Anyway, we will watch him and see what he does."

"Why is he coming here as timekeeper?" asked Sibyl.

"That is another of his foolish notions," Mr. Winterbourn replied. "He does n't want people to know that he has anything to do with the mills, so he is coming here as a common workman on a salary. The fellow must be half-witted."

"It will be very romantic and interesting," said Sibyl thoughtfully. "I hope whatever he is he will have decent manners, for I can 't bear to have a clown about the house."

"Whatever he is, mind you treat him well," said her father, taking some papers out of his desk as he prepared to leave the room.

"You may trust me," said Sibyl easily. "I'm as much interested as you are."

Long after her father had gone out Sibyl sat before the fire, thinking over what he had told her, and her aunt's domestic grievances in regard to the servant-girl's blunders fell on deaf ears.

## CHAPTER XIII

## NELLY'S DREAM REALIZED

NOW, Miss Jackson, I am just in time to take you home. Jump in, I am going right by your door."

Dr. Thornton drew up his black horse, Solon, before the post-office steps, and beckoned to a young lady who was just coming out of the building. The doctor was supervisor of the schools, and had been very kind to the new assistant ever since she had been in Dedham.

"Thank you, doctor," said she, accepting the invitation and climbing into the old-fashioned buggy. "How kind of you to take pity on a hard working schoolma'am trudging along on foot."

"I like to give the young ladies rides," replied the doctor, "but my new rival has cut me out; they do n't come to me now with their little ailments." "I will, doctor," said the young lady stoutly.

"Dr. Farnsworth will never dose me for any ailments, little or big."

"Holloa!" exclaimed the doctor. "Do n't you like him?"

"I ought not to say that I do n't," said she, hesitating, "for I really know very little about him."

"He is very popular with the young ladies," said the doctor, "and seems to be making his way. I have had no professional intercourse with him, for he did not ask me to the consultation he had over one of his patients last week."

"I do n't think that was very respectful or polite."

"Oh, he wants to oust us old fellows," said the doctor laughing. "He thinks it is time I was laid on the shelf. I have been talking of retiring for the last ten years. I shall have to now, and wife and I will take a trip to Europe."

"That would be lovely for you," said his companion, "but won't you please wait till I leave Dedham? I do n't know what I should do without you and your wife, and if I should be sick I 'm sure I should n't want Frank—Dr. Farnsworth, I mean—to tend me."

"You do n't look as though you had any intention of being sick," laughed the doctor. "If all the girls looked as rosy and healthy as you do we doctors would n't be so busy."

"I do n't intend to be sick," she replied; "but I do n't know when it may be my fate to slip on a piece of banana. When I do I want you round, doctor."

"I'll come if you meet with that fate here in Dedham," he promised. "I hear you expect your mother, Miss Jackson."

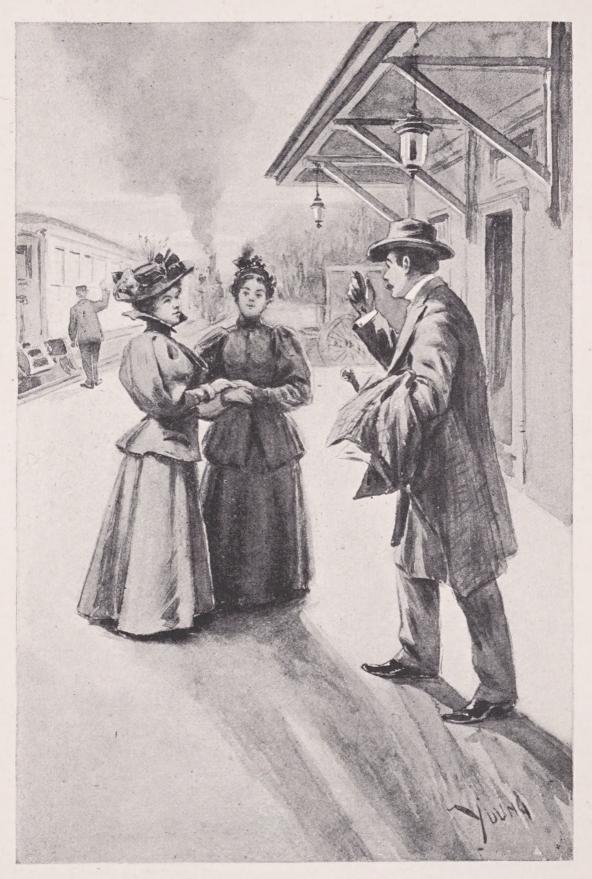
"Yes, she is coming to-morrow," and the assistant's face brightened visibly. "The house is all ready. I did the last thing to-day, and left the fire ready to light."

"Miss Stone has taken you in."

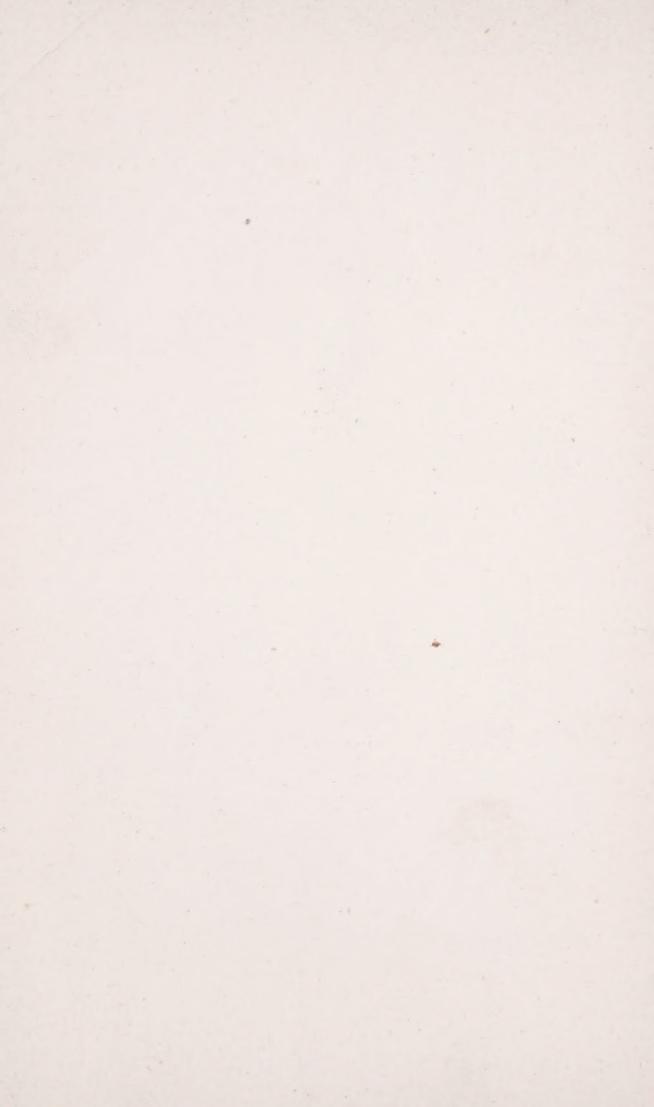
"Yes, was n't it good of her?" said the young lady gratefully. "Mamma and I would have been lonesome in a house by ourselves, for we are social folks, and have always been used to a large family."

"A dressmaker's shop on the other side of the hall ought to keep things lively," the doctor remarked.

"Yes, and we will know everything that is going on in town," laughed the young lady. "Miss



"HERE IS AN OLD FRIEND."



Stone tells me a piece of news every day. Yesterday she informed me that Miss Winterbourn was going to a concert to-morrow evening, and had a handsome new dress made on purpose for the occasion."

"That is interesting," said the doctor. "The best of us like to learn all we can about our neighbors' private affairs. Did she have a bulletin to-day?"

"To-day? Let me see. Oh, yes, she told me the Winterbourns were going to have a boarder, which she thought was rather odd, as Mr. Winterbourn is well off, and surely does n't need to take boarders to help out his income."

"I heard there was a young man going there to board," said the doctor. "Let me see—what is his name?—Ashton or Aller, something like that; anyway it begins with an A."

"Miss Stone told me he was to hold some position down on the works."

"Timekeeper," replied the doctor. "It is rather odd for Winterbourn to take him to board, but I suppose he fell rather behind during the hard times."

"How nice it is that the mills are running again."

"Yes, it has been the salvation of the town," said the doctor, drawing rein at his companion's boarding-place. "Now, Miss Jackson, you must bring your mother to see us."

"Indeed I shall," she replied. "She will want to thank you for your kindness to me."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the doctor. "We do n't want to be thanked for enjoying your society. Good night, Miss Jackson. Go on, Solon."

The next day Miss Stone was somewhat excited, for her tenants were going to move in. Everything was ready, and the front room looked very inviting with its carpet of wood shades, its cheap but pretty draperies before doors and windows, its easy chairs, open piano, and the fire in the open Franklin all ready to light.

At four o'clock the assistant came flying in with a bouquet of roses, chrysanthemums and geraniums in her hand from Mrs. Thornton's choice plants, which she hastily arranged in a vase on the table to welcome the newcomer.

As the cars rolled into the Dedham station at five o'clock, a young man and a middle-aged lady, who appeared to be travelling together,

were among the passengers to leave the train. As the young man helped his companion off the car they both looked eagerly around as if in search of some one.

"There she is," said the lady suddenly. "There is Nelly."

The young man looked in the direction she indicated and saw a young lady coming rapidly along the platform toward them, but she did not rush straight at the lady and throw both arms round her neck, as he expected her to do, though one glimpse of her face, as she quietly kissed her, showed that she was full of delight at the meeting.

"O mamma!" she said, "I am so glad to see you here at last. Are you very tired? Where is your check?"

"Here is an old friend you have not spoken to, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson with a smile.

Nelly had not thought of connecting the tall young man who stood near them with her mother, and looked up at him in surprise.

"She does n't know me," said he ruefully. "I knew she would n't; but I should have recognized her if I had seen her in Egypt."

"It is George, Nelly," Mrs. Jackson explained.

"George!" repeated Nelly vaguely.

"No wonder she does n't know me!" he exclaimed. "She has even forgotten my existence. Think of all the people you have met by that name, and, in the remote ages of the past, you may recall having seen me."

"It is n't George Arlington, is it?" said Nelly incredulously.

"Yes, it is surely George Arlington," said her mother smilingly.

"Do you remember knowing a person by that name in the long, long ago?" asked George, offering her his hand.

Nelly gave him hers, and for a moment they stood looking at each other, trying to reconcile the person before them with the picture they had carried in their minds for so many years. Nelly could not realize that the young man with the clear, steady blue eyes, and strong, earnest face, was the yellow-haired boy with the merry whistle and saucy smile whom she used to know.

George on his part did not feel so strange. He had carried away the picture of a brown-eyed maiden, with a knot of curls tied in her neck, and he found her not so very much changed. The same brown eyes were looking up into his,

the curls were gathered up and fastened at the back of her head; the dresses were a little longer, the face a little more womanly, but that was all the difference.

"I can't make it seem real," said Nelly, with a little laugh, "it has come upon me so suddenly."

"And you had forgotten that I existed," said George reproachfully.

"Of course I had not," Nelly replied; "but I did not know in what part of the round world you had taken up your abode, and was naturally surprised at your suddenly appearing in Dedham. You are not going to stay, of course."

"Of course I am," he replied, "and will take your checks, Mother Jackson. Where do you want your baggage sent?"

"To Miss Augusta Stone's," replied Nelly. "Every one in Dedham knows where that is. It is so near that mamma and I can walk."

"Where are you going, George?" said Mrs. Jackson. "I believe you have not told me that."

"I am going to a Mr. Winterbourn's," he replied, "and, as I have n't the remotest idea where it is, I think I shall get one of these cabbies to take charge of me and my belongings."

"Why, you must be the young man Dr. Thornton meant," Nelly exclaimed. "But, no, you can 't be."

"What about that young man?" demanded George. "What did the doctor say about him?"

"He said a young man by the name of Ashton was going to board at Mr. Winterbourn's."

"My name is Arlington, Miss Jackson," said George gravely, "but I am going to board at Mr. Winterbourn's."

"But you can't be that young man," Nelly persisted.

"Why not?"

"Why, he is going to be timekeeper at the mills," said Nelly blushing.

"Why can 't I be timekeeper at the mills?" asked George.

"Why, you can," stammered Nelly, "only I thought—that is, I did n't suppose—"

"That I could," said George, finishing the sentence for her. "Well, perhaps I can 't, but I mean to try."

"O George," said Nelly in confusion, "you know I did n't mean that."

"Nelly does n't doubt your ability, George," said Mrs. Jackson, kindly coming to her daugh-

ter's aid, "but, like myself, she was surprised that you, with your means, should take such a position. I am sure she thinks none the less of you on that account, though."

"There," said Nelly, in a relieved tone, "mamma has said what I meant. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," he replied with a smile. "I must say good-bye for the present, and will see that your baggage is delivered all right, Mother Jackson."

"Thank you," said both ladies, as he touched his cap and turned away.

"Where did you meet him, mamma?" asked Nelly, as they walked up the street together.

"Just after I got on the train at Boston a strange young man, as I thought, came into the car, and, after looking at me sharply for a moment, came up and spoke to me. I did not recognize him any more than you did; he had to tell me who he was."

"He has changed so," said Nelly. "Dear me! I did n't inquire for Violet or for his father and mother. I saw him such a short time, and was so surprised at seeing him at all."

"They are all well and are at home just now,"

Mrs. Jackson replied. "But what a pretty place Dedham is! I had no idea it was so pleasant."

"You must fall in love with everything, mamma," said Nelly, forgetting all but the fact that her mother was with her, and that her long-cherished dream was about to be realized. "The place, the school, the house, and Miss Augusta, are all charming."

"I hope it is not a long walk from Miss Stone's to the schoolhouse," said Mrs. Jackson anxiously.

"No, it is just the constitutional I need," Nelly declared. "And Joe—mamma, you have no idea what a cherub he is. He lets me have my own way about everything."

"That is certainly a trait in his favor," said Mrs. Jackson smiling. "I hope he won't do all the work."

"I won't let him do that," said Nelly. "I insist upon bearing my share of the burdens. But there is the house, with Miss Augusta and her staff looking out of the window to see what the assistant's mother looks like. If they weren't looking I would dance a jig to give vent to my feelings."

Mrs. Jackson was almost as much excited as

her daughter, and her eyes shone with pride and happiness as Nelly escorted her into the house. Before she was allowed to take off her bonnet Nelly took her over every part of it, from the chamber where all her dainty belongings were, to the cellar where she duly inspected the provisions Nelly had laid in for winter.

"Now," said Nelly, when her mother's wraps were off and she was seated in the easiest chair before the open Franklin, "you must sit still and rest while I get supper."

"Let me get supper," urged Mrs. Jackson; "you must be tired after teaching all day."

"Why teaching is play, mamma," Nelly declared, "and the sight of you seated in that rocking-chair makes me feel as fresh as a lark. Besides, mamma, you couldn't get a meal on a small scale, you poor dear, after getting suppers and dinners for a houseful of boarders. You'll never do it again, Mother Jackson. Now watch and see how I manage. How many times I have done this in imagination!"

The oil-stove was brought out and lighted. Over this Nelly made coffee, cooked an omelet, and toasted bread, then, drawing the little round table up to the fire, she covered it with a white

cloth and set the meal out temptingly upon it; telling her mother where each article came from. Miss Augusta had given them the bread to commence housekeeping with, the plum preserves and delicate ham Mrs. Thornton had sent, the eggs Joe had obtained from some unknown source, and the coffee she had bought herself at the grocer's. It was a cosey, pleasant meal, that first one in the new home.

"I never was so happy in my life," Nelly declared. "Did you ever eat a nicer supper, mamma?"

"I do n't think I ever did, Nelly," Mrs. Jackson truthfully replied.

"We only need a cat to make our picture of domestic bliss perfect," the young lady went on. "I would only have to mention to Joe that I had such a want and he would present me with a kitten at once."

"I am so glad you are teaching with an old friend," said Mrs. Jackson; "it makes it so much pleasanter."

"There!" said Nelly, as she put the table back in its proper place and set Mrs. Thornton's bouquet upon it, "the height of my ambition is reached; you are seated in my house, for which I pay Miss Augusta so many dollars a month, and won't have a thing to worry about, nor a single boarder to please."

"My dear Nelly, how thankful we ought to be!" said Mrs. Jackson, looking round the bright pretty room and then at her daughter, who gave it its chief charm in her eyes.

"How thankful I am!" said the grateful girl, kneeling on the rug by her mother's chair. "I often wonder why God is so good to me; I don't deserve it."

"I do n't know, Nelly," said her mother fondly; 
"you have earned this home and I'm sure you deserve to be happy in it. I am thankful every day that I have such a daughter."

"I am almost as good as a son; am I not?" said Nelly merrily.

"You are a hundred times better than a son," Mrs. Jackson declared. "A boy could not have been the comfort to me that you have been, Nelly."

"Even if Mr. Arlington would have helped me to business. I wonder," she added suddenly, "why George has come here to work in the mills!"

"It is rather strange," her mother replied, but I was very much pleased with George and

liked what he said. It shows that prosperity has not spoiled him."

"Is n't it funny," said Nelly, "that Frank, Joe and I, and now George, should all come here?"

"How does Frank seem?" asked Mrs. Jackson.
"Has he changed any?"

"I do n't know," said Nelly slowly. "To tell the truth, I can't feel very cordial toward Frank when I think how mean he was when George was expelled."

"You would not lay that up against Frank now? He may have repented."

"Perhaps he has," Nelly admitted. "He is very popular here, and regular in his attendance at church, but, do you know? I can never trust Frank."

"I know he used to strike me as not ringing true," Mrs. Jackson replied, "but we have not heard anything against him since that time, and we ought not to let that prejudice us; he may be sincere now."

"I'm sure I hope he is," said Nelly; "anyway, the private opinion of the little schoolma'am can't affect him any. But there is a knock; Miss Augusta is coming to make us a call."

Miss Augusta had been anxious to see her new tenants ever since she watched Nelly and her mother enter the house, and could hardly wait till she knew they were through supper before she crossed the hall and tapped at their door. Nelly welcomed her cordially, and, after introducing her mother, drew another chair up before the fire for their guest.

Miss Augusta inwardly confessed that the little parlor was very pretty and cosey, and much more attractive than her state reception-room across the hall; and while she talked with her hostess her little sharp gray eyes took in all the details, and she inwardly speculated how much the piano cost, and where all the books came from.

She had not been there long before there was a ring at the bell.

- "Dear me!" exclaimed Nelly laughing, "how are we going to tell which one is wanted?"
- "I ain't expecting any one to-night," said Miss Stone. "Perhaps it's Mr. Allen; I'll learn to know his ring."
- "Oh yes," replied Nelly. "I had not thought of him, but of course he would come to see mamma."

Miss Augusta insisted upon returning to her

own part of the house, and, in spite of Mrs. Jackson's urging, brought her call to a hasty close. But she did not get inside her own door before she heard Nelly exclaim as she admitted her visitor:

"Oh, Joe, whom do you think I saw at the station to-day?"

#### CHAPTER XIV

#### AN EXETER REUNION

I was so seldom that Sibyl Winterbourn took any interest in domestic affairs that her aunt was surprised to have her come out into the dining-room the day on which their boarder was expected and attend to the setting of the table with her own hands.

"I should think you were expecting company," said the elder Miss Winterbourn. "Seems to me you are making a great spread for that boarder of your father's."

"These things might as well be used as stand idle in the china-closet," her niece replied, arranging the handsome silver service.

"That girl in the kitchen will break those thin glass tumblers the first time she wipes them," Miss Winterbourn declared.

"I believe there are plenty more at Wood's."

"You talk as though your father was a million-

aire, and could set his table with new dishes every day."

"Papa will not care how much I use the best dishes, and as he buys them and does not expect you to pay the bills, you need not worry if some of them do get broken."

Having thus ousted her aunt and driven her from the field, Sibyl continued her work and made the table look as pretty and attractive as possible.

Father and daughter were both looking forward to the arrival of their boarder with a great deal of curiosity, but the new timekeeper had not been in the house half-an-hour, before they were more puzzled than ever. Why had this wide-awake, intelligent young man invested in a business that was not paying a cent of profit?

Sibyl was very quiet during the meal, taking no part in the conversation, which was mostly on business and politics, unless she was addressed, when she answered in an intelligent manner which showed she understood the drift of the conversation and had her own opinions. But she was quietly observant of their boarder, and, like her father, made up her mind that he was no fool, which made his conduct all the more puzzling.

When the meal was ended Mr. Winterbourn carried his boarder into the library for a quiet talk.

"Have a cigar?" asked the gentleman, offering the contents of his cigar-case to the stranger.

"No, thank you," he replied, "I never smoke."

"Never smoke!" echoed Mr. Winterbourn, wondering if the fellow was in his right mind. "You do n't know what you miss. Every man ought to smoke."

"I do n't agree with you," said the young man frankly. "I think it would be better if men gave up the use of tobacco altogether."

"We won't stop to argue; it isn't worth it," said Mr. Winterbourn with a slight sneer. "I brought you in here to have a private talk. My sister and daughter do n't suspect that you are anything but a timekeeper."

"That is right," replied George. "I do n't care to have my connection with the business known just yet. I suppose you have carried out my orders."

"Yes, the mills have been running some time, but you were very foolish to put the wages so high. You see, there is n't the demand and sale there was ten years ago."

"I know it," said George quietly.

"You had better cut the hands down thirty per cent; that was all they were earning when the mills shut down."

"I will let you know when I want a cut-down."

Mr. Winterbourn surveyed his companion through a cloud of tobacco-smoke, but the young man's face told him nothing, for he shut a mask down over it which completely concealed whatever thoughts were passing through his mind.

"The fellow is no fool," thought Mr. Winterbourn for the sixth time that evening.

"How many hands do you employ?" inquired George.

"About three hundred."

"And how do they live?"

"How do they live?" echoed Mr. Winterbourn in a voice of astonishment.

"Yes, have many of the men families? Are their houses well drained and in good condition, and do their children go to school?"

"Blest if I know!" ejaculated Mr. Winterbourn.

George made no comment, but an expression flitted across his face as though he made a men-

tal note of his own question, and intended answering it himself since his agent could not.

"You employ women in some of the rooms, don't you?" he asked.

"Yes, women and girls."

"Have they homes here?"

"Some of 'em have, and there 's a boardinghouse for those who have n't."

"What sort of a house is it? Is it well conducted?"

"Oh, it is well enough," replied Mr. Winterbourn carelessly. "I don't hear any fault found."

George made another mental note, and then asked: "Do many of the men drink?"

"Oh, the whole of them, more or less," replied Mr. Winterbourn promptly, for he was well posted on this question.

George did not speak again for a few minutes, for he seemed to be pondering something. His host still regarded him through a cloud of to-bacco-smoke. He was not a fool, but he was evidently a philanthropist, and, in Mr. Winterbourn's opinion, there was not much difference between the two.

Before either spoke again the door was opened and Sibyl looked in. She was ready for the con-

cert, in the dress Miss Stone had sent home a few hours before, and looked like a bird of brilliant plumage in her stylish outfit.

"May I come in, or do I interrupt?" she asked, pausing just inside the door.

Both gentlemen looked at her, her father proudly, the stranger admiringly.

"We are talking business," Mr. Winterbourn replied. "What do you want, my dear?"

"Oh, I'm not going to stay," she replied. "I only came in to tell you that my escort is waiting to take me to the concert. I know better than to interrupt these business interviews."

"I hope you will enjoy the concert, Miss Winterbourn," said George, rising to hold the door open for her.

"Thank you; there is no doubt but that I shall," and with a bright smile over her shoulder she hurried along the hall.

George was busy all the next day, and Sibyl saw nothing of him until evening when she heard him coming down-stairs, and, determined to learn, if possible, where he was going, she went out into the hall.

George's hand was on the door-knob when the young lady of the house accosted him.

- "Are you going out, Mr. Arlington?" she asked.
- "Yes, there is a call I wish to make," he replied frankly.
- "Who in the world is there here he knows well enough to call on?" was the young lady's mental comment; aloud she said:
- "Could you do an errand for me? or would it be too much trouble?"
- "It will be no trouble at all," George replied.
  "I shall be glad to do anything I can for you,
  Miss Winterbourn."
- "I would like very much to have a letter mailed," replied Sibyl, "if it will not take you out of your way to stop at the post-office."
- "Not at all. I am going down on Main Street."
- "Then if it will not be too much trouble I will seal and direct it."

George waited while Sibyl got her letter ready, and then left her thoroughly provoked because she could not find out, without direct questioning, where her boarder was going to make a call.

"I'd like to know what acquaintance he has made in this short time," she mused. "There is no one on Main Street he would be apt to go and see. There is something mysterious about him after all."

It so happened that another young man had planned to make a call that same evening. Frank Farnsworth was not very well pleased to meet two of his old schoolmates in Dedham in the persons of Nelly Jackson and Joe Allen. The latter he hated on account of the part he had played in his exposure and disgrace at Exeter Academy, but the only way he could show his dislike was by treating Joe with a cool contempt and indifference which gave him no satisfaction because Joe apparently did not notice it. He was also a little uneasy for fear they might expose some of his past history and injure his growing popularity. Joe he knew well enough would not say anything, but Nelly he did not trust, for he knew the young lady disliked him. The only way he could think of to prevent anything unpleasant coming to light was to win Nelly over by showing her some attention. He had not succeeded, however, to his satisfaction, for Nelly was very indifferent to what the other young ladies so much admired; but he did not give up, and when he heard that Nelly and her mother were settled at Miss Stone's he made haste to call.

"Has Miss Augusta sent for you to prescribe for the neuralgia that is troubling her left eyebrow?" inquired Nelly, as Frank presented himself. "Excuse me, and I will tell her the doctor has come."

"I do n't know anything about Miss Augusta or her neuralgia either," replied Frank. "I have come to see you, of course."

"Oh, then please step in this way," said Nelly. "Mamma will be pleased to see you."

Mrs. Jackson was glad to see him and shook hands cordially. She never believed the worst of any one until she was obliged to, and hoped that in the years which had passed since Frank left Exeter he had redeemed his character.

Frank had been there but a little while when George came in. The young men had met before, but neither was very well pleased at finding the other in Dedham. Nelly left her mother to entertain Frank and began to talk to George.

"I was so surprised yesterday I did not think to ask about Violet. How is she? How I would like to see her! I suppose she has changed so much she would not seem like the same girl."

"Vi is at home now," George replied. "I

don't think she has changed any more than you have, but perhaps I am not in a position to judge."

"I believe I will write to her," said Nelly suddenly. "Do you think she would care to hear from me?"

"I'm sure she would. Violet often speaks of you, Nell, and says she is going to write, but you know she is not much of a correspondent. I told them you were here in the letter I sent home last night. It makes it real jolly for me. How natural everything looks! Is that the same old piano?"

"The very same," laughed Nelly. "It still lives. I had it tuned and put in apple-pie order after it got here."

"The sight of it makes me want to get up and sing—'Bless thy little Lambs to-night.' By-the-by, where are Mary and her little Lambs? I have n't heard a word concerning their fate. You know I left Exeter rather suddenly."

"The little Lambs are teaching out west," replied Nelly, "and Mary is married and settled on a farm up in Vermont. I made her a long visit one vacation."

"Is it possible Mary has got ahead of me and

is married and settled down? She has done a good deal in a short time, seems to me."

"Why, it is eight years since Mary left Exeter, George," said Nelly. "That is time enough for people to get married and settled down."

"It has n't been time enough for me," laughed George. "What have you been doing during those eight years, Nelly?"

"I! Oh, I went to the academy a year after you left, and then I taught district schools until we raked and scraped enough together for me to enter college."

"What did Mother Jackson do then?"

"She went too," laughed Nelly. "They wanted a matron for the girls' boarding-house, and mamma was fortunate enough to get the position. I have told you all my adventures; now I want to hear yours."

"I have n't any worth telling," George replied.

"Father did n't put me in the quarry to work, for mother begged me off. Sometimes I think it would have been better for me if father had done as he threatened."

"You went to college," said Nelly, her eyes asking for the history of those years.

"Yes, I went to college," he replied, "but I

did n't work there as you did, Nell. I had to learn a good many lessons before I woke up to the fact that there is something more to do in this life than having a good time. I never forgot the lessons I learned at Exeter, though. Mother Jackson's influence has been the guiding star of my life."

"I am so glad," said Nelly with shining eyes.

"I skylarked round after leaving college," George continued, "until grandfather was taken sick and sent for me. I took care of him for six months, for he would not let any one else do a thing for him; and when he died and the business was settled, I felt that it was time I was of some use in the world when so much was entrusted to my care."

Nelly opened her mouth to ask another question when the door-bell rang again.

"Another caller, Nelly?" said her mother smiling.

"It must be for Miss Stone this time," Nelly declared, "but I will spare her eyebrow and go and see."

But Nelly was wrong, for, instead of a customer to see Miss Stone, she found Joe waiting on the steps. "This is a real Exeter reunion," said Nelly merrily. "If we exercise a proper amount of imagination we will pull out our books and go to studying for to-morrow's lessons."

"There are too many gaps to make it perfect," said Joe. "We want Violet and Mary to make a reunion."

"And Maud," said George. "I have not thought to inquire for her."

"She was married last summer and lives in Boston," replied Frank. "She has made a good marriage."

"Dear me, I am growing old!" said George with a sigh. "All my old schoolmates are getting married."

"We will get sentimental talking over old times," said Nelly, "and George will try to finish that ode he commenced so long ago —

"There was an academy which stood on a hill,
And if it 's not gone it is standing there still!—"

"That 's a fact," laughed George. "I hope the boys and girls of the present and future will have as good a time and receive as much good from that academy as I have."

"Hear! hear!" said Joe merrily.

"No, I'm not going to make a speech," said

George soberly, "for I do n't know how; but, in spite of the way in which I left Exeter, I have always cherished a grateful remembrance of it."

"How do you like this place, George?" said Frank, who did not care to talk about the old Exeter days with these people who knew all about his career there.

"Very much," George replied. "It seems to be quite a business place."

"It is now," said Frank, "but last year every one thought it was on its last legs."

"The mills shutting down was the cause of it," said Joe quietly.

"Whoever bought out that company did a grand thing for the place," said Mrs. Jackson warmly.

"Yes, I never should have come here if the mills had n't commenced operations," said Frank complacently; at which speech George smiled quietly to himself.

The three young men left the house together, all unconscious of the fact that a corner of the curtain was raised in the front room across the hall, and a pair of sharp gray eyes looked out after them.

"There, they 've gone after so long a time," ex-

claimed Miss Stone; "now I hope there will be a little quiet. Such a racket all the time; folks here every evening. I almost wish I had n't let the rooms. My land! if there ain't three of 'em!"

"Who are they?" asked the girl who was making buttonholes in the back room.

"The short one is Mr. Allen, and the other one has a look like Dr. Farnsworth, but I never set eyes on that great tall splice before. Well," dropping the curtain, "I hope there 'll be a little peace for the rest of the evening. I should think three at a time was enough."

Possibly Miss Stone would not have been so bitter if neuralgic pains had not been darting like lightning through her temples. It is hard to be sweet-tempered and think well of our neighbors when our head is racked with pain, and Miss Augusta was put out with the whole world.

A knock at the door, and a bright face looked in.

"May I come in and help?" asked Nelly. "I know you have had the neuralgia all day and can't feel much like sewing? What are you doing? Getting that braid ready to stitch on? Oh, I can do anything as plain and simple as that."

As she took the work away from her, and, sitting down by the machine, began to baste in a way that meant business, Miss Augusta felt that she could forgive her even the sin of having three young men call upon her at once.

"Go and lie down on the sofa, Miss Stone," said Nelly. "Mamma is heating some water on our oil-stove, and will put some hot cloths on your head. You must not think of sewing any more to-night."

"You are very kind," said Miss Augusta, laying her aching head on the sofa-pillow, "I believe I am tired."

After all, it was pleasant to have such neighbors. No one had ever done anything for her neuralgia before, and when Mrs. Jackson came in with her light step and soothing touch, Miss Stone decided not to give her tenants warning, even if they had young men callers every evening.

## CHAPTER XV

## NELLY'S SICK SCHOLAR

before he awoke to find himself, not famous, but popular. He was feasted and fêted, smiled on by young and old, and if he had not been used to it all his life, he might have been spoiled; but as it was, he took it as a matter of course, only wondering once in a while why they made so much of him when they thought he was only timekeeper down at the mills. It was really due to the fact that Mrs. Buckman knew his father.

"Mr. Arlington is a granite king," said she to her lady callers one afternoon, "and I can't imagine why George is here working for a salary."

"Perhaps he has got into some trouble," one lady suggested, "and his father has cast him off."

"Or they may have quarreled," added another.

"That may be," said Mrs. Buckman. "Dr. Farnsworth told me in strict confidence—he did n't

want it to go from him, so do n't mention it—that George was very fast when he was in college. He and the doctor are old friends and schoolmates, you know."

Dr. Farnsworth was a friend few would care to have, for when he saw George's growing popularity he had mentioned the fact to a dozen, in strict confidence, that George had been very dissipated, but that he hoped he had sowed his wild oats and would settle down now and behave himself. Instead of hurting George's reputation, Frank's stories only made him the more interesting, and the gossip about his quarrel with his father, added to the rest, made George appear quite romantic.

Mrs. Buckman decided to give a party, so that the young people could have a chance to get acquainted with this interesting young man who was making such a sensation, and, heading her list of invitations with George's name, added those of her favorites among the young men and women in her circle of acquaintance. When the list was finished she found she needed one more young man to make an even number.

"Who else is there?" she pondered. "I have asked every one I know. Oh, there is the princi-

pal of the high-school! He is a nice young man. I will ask him. I suppose I ought to ask the assistant too, but I have got all the girls I want. I have only met her once or twice, and she can 't expect to be invited everywhere."

It so happened that on the week of the party several events occurred of great interest to the different characters of this story. Monday morning a girl, who lived in the country and was working for her board in Dedham for the sake of going to school, caused a great excitement in the school-room by fainting away. A carriage was brought to take her to her boarding-house, but when the doctor told the lady who employed her that the girl was threatened with typhoid fever she refused to let her remain, but, sick as she was, ordered her to be sent home at once.

This roused Nelly's indignation and sympathy. She was interested in the girl, not only because she was a good scholar and working for her education, but because Miss Stone had told her that she had a drunkard for a father who did not pretend to support his family.

"And now that they have sickness in the family the Lord knows what will become of them," said the dressmaker, sadly shaking her head. "He does know, Miss Stone," said Nelly, with a glad ring in her voice. "We can always feel sure of that."

"Yes, but He won't tell," complained Miss Augusta, "and it looks pretty hard for 'em, I think."

Nelly thought of her sick scholar all the week, but heard nothing from her, for the family lived several miles out of the town, and no one seemed to know anything about them. Wednesday she met Dr. Farnsworth on the street and, instead of passing him with a bow as was her wont, Nelly paused, and, looking anxiously up in his face, said eagerly:

- "O doctor, how is Ada Black?"
- "Ada Black!" repeated the doctor. "I do n't believe I have the honor of an acquaintance with that lady."
- "You know whom I mean," said Nelly impatiently; "the girl who fainted in school Monday morning. You were called to attend her."
- "Oh, yes, I remember. I did n't know what the girl's name was."
  - "How is she?" asked Nelly eagerly.
  - "I have n't the remotest idea."
- "Why, you are doctoring her," said Nelly in surprise.

- "No, I am not," he replied.
- "Who is-Dr. Thornton?"
- "I do n't think any one is. But why are yon so interested? Do you want a diagnosis of the case?"
- "She is my scholar," said Nelly, "and I wanted to hear from her. Do you suppose she has typhoid fever and no physician is attending her?"
  - "I am afraid that is the case," said he gravely.
- "Oh, dear," said Nelly, looking troubled, "it must be they are too poor to employ a doctor. Is n't it dreadful?"
- "I had not thought of that," said Frank gravely, "but it must be the case. The father is a worthless drunkard who does little or nothing for his family."
- "Do you think there is any hope of Ada's getting over it?" asked Nelly, looking up at him anxiously.
  - "Oh, with proper care she would be all right."
  - "But you see she won't have any care at all."
- "Then I'm afraid the chances are against her," said Frank soberly.
- "Can't something be done?" asked Nelly desperately. "Could n't you go there without

being called, and hint that because you came without being sent for they need not worry about the bill?"

Nelly looked at him doubtfully as she spoke, for she had but little hope that he would pay the slightest heed to her suggestion, and was surprised when he replied:

"I had not thought of that, but it is like you to remind me that I could do something of the kind."

"And will you?" she asked in grateful surprise.

"Why, yes, when I am up that way I can drop in and see if there is anything I can do for the girl."

"Thank you ever so much!" said Nelly warmly; "and after you call if you will let me know if there is anything I can do, I will be ever so much obliged."

"I should be only too glad to do so," and, touching his cap, Dr. Farnsworth went on his way, well pleased with the interview.

Nelly went home full of remorse to think how she had misjudged Frank.

"He was perfectly willing to do whatever he could," said she to her mother, "as soon as I reminded him of it."

"A great deal of the selfishness of the world is

due to thoughtlessness, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson. "It is because we do not think enough of others and their needs."

"But I thought Frank would n't care how much poor people suffered," said Nelly, "even if he knew and saw it. I'm sorry I misjudged him so. He may have changed, as you said, mamma."

"Always think the best of people, Nelly," said Mrs. Jackson cheerfully, "and give them the benefit of the doubt."

Friday noon Nelly came running down-stairs from the recitation-room, pulling on her gloves.

"Are you going to the party to-night?" asked Joe, joining her at the door.

"No," said she in surprise. "I'm not going to a party; did n't know there was one to go to."

"Have n't you had an invitation from Mrs. Buckman for to-night?" asked Joe.

"No," said Nelly, shaking her head; "that lady has never invited me to her house."

"Why did n't she?" demanded Joe. "You are acquainted with her?"

"I met her at that horrible, stiff sociable I went to, and she bows when she meets me at church. But I 'm not what you would call acquainted with her." "She might have invited you, anyway," declared Joe wrathfully.

"Has she asked you?" said Nelly. "I suppose she has, or you would be as ignorant as I on the subject."

"Yes, she sent me an invitation," said Joe, "but I do n't believe I'll go."

"Why not?" demanded Nelly.

"You know I hate parties," he replied. "I'd rather saw wood all day than go to one. I feel like a gawk standing round trying to talk to some lady I never saw before."

Joe had struggled hard all these years to overcome his bashfulness, but had not succeeded.

"You won't have to stand round, Joe," said Nelly consolingly. "It is probably a progressive party of some kind, and if you do n't go some one will be left without a partner."

"I do n't think it is a fellow's duty to inflict torture on himself by going to every party he is invited to," said Joe gloomily.

"But you ought to enjoy them, Joe," said Nelly laughing. "It gives you a chance to meet your friends when they are looking their best and are pleasant and gay; then there is always some enjoyable entertainment." "But I never was intended for such affairs," Joe persisted. "I am out of my element. I can never think of the first thing to say, and if I move about I step on the ladies' dresses until I'm sure they wish I was in the moon. I do n't see what they invite me for?"

"It is a sad case," said Nelly laughing.

"I thought if you were going I might manage to get through," he continued. "I can talk to you, so you would be a sort of life-preserver to cling to when I'm launched on the sea of society."

"I'm sorry I can't serve you in that capacity," said Nelly gravely. "If Mrs. Buckman had known that the principal of the high-school needed the assistant to keep his head above water she would have, probably, invited me."

"I sha'n't go without you, that is certain," said Joe decidedly.

"Now, Joe, you must," declared Nelly; "it is your duty."

The word duty always brought Joe round, for he was as conscientious as he was when a boy going to Exeter Academy.

"Do you really think I ought to go?" he asked, pausing as they reached the corner of Main Street.

"Yes, you must," said Nelly gravely. "It is really your duty, for when a lady honors you with an invitation to her house it is not doing right not to accept it."

"Well," said Joe, with a long-drawn sigh, "I'll go if you say I must, but I hope Mrs. Buckman will see what a gawk I am, and not trouble to invite me again."

"That is very ungrateful," laughed Nelly, as she turned the corner and passed on to Miss Augusta's abode.

Two days had passed, and Nelly had heard nothing from her sick scholar. Either Frank had forgotten his promise or had been so busy he had had no time to make charity calls.

"To-morrow is Saturday," she mused, as she hurried home from school that same night. "I believe I will hire a horse, and mamma and I will drive out there; only it costs so much to hire a horse here, and I'm not sure of the road, and mamma is afraid of livery-stable horses. Oh dear! I wish I knew what to do!"

Nelly was so absorbed in her reflections that she did not notice a young man trying to overtake her, until a voice at her side exclaimed:

"I had about come to the conclusion that you

had invested in some seven-league boots, you were hurrying along so fast."

"Why, George! where did you come from?" asked Nelly, looking up in surprise.

"I have been tearing down street at such a furious pace, I have hardly breath enough left to answer you. My starting-point was the mills."

"I had no idea I was walking so fast," said she, "but I suppose I have got into the habit of it by staying at home till the last minute, and then hurrying for fear I will be late to school."

"I set out to whistle as I used to in Exeter when I saw you ahead in the distance. Would you have recognized it, do you think?"

"I doubt if I should have noticed it, I was so busy thinking."

"I wonder what was absorbing you," said George, gravely, "but would never dare ask."

"I would just as leave tell you as not," said Nelly, frankly. "I was thinking about Ada Black, who was taken sick in school last Monday. I have not heard a word from her, and was just wondering if I could persuade mamma to trust to a livery-stable horse and my driving, and go and see her to-morrow."

"If Mother Jackson allows you to go off with

any kind of a horse the stableman has a mind to palm off on you she will be doing a very foolish thing."

"I suppose you think I can't drive," said Nelly, with a pout, "but I can, and I would n't let the stableman palm every kind of a horse off on me. I would inspect the animal very closely, and inquire all about his tricks and his manners. I am sure that no stableman would deliberately plan to break the neck of a harmless schoolma'am."

"But, honestly, Nelly," said George, gravely, "I do n't think it would be safe."

"I suppose that is just what mamma will say," said Nelly, with a sigh, "so I might as well make up my mind to stay at home."

George was silent for a moment. It was fine sleighing, and the moon already hung like a silver bow in the azure sky. It struck him that a moonlight ride with Nelly would be delightful if he could bring it about.

"Nelly," said he abruptly, "I would be delighted to drive you up there this evening, if you will go."

"O George," she exclaimed in delight; "can you, just as well as not?"

"It would give me great pleasure," he replied, "if you will go."

"I want to go very much," said Nelly, honestly, "and it is very kind of you to offer to take me, George."

"I think I am very kind to take so much trouble to please an old friend," said he, gravely. "I did not know I was deserving of so much merit. Will you be ready by seven? That will be none too early to start."

"Yes, I will be ready,—but, oh, I forgot," she added suddenly; "there is Mrs. Buckman's party."

"Would you rather go there?" asked George, conscious of feeling disappointed.

"Oh, I'm not invited," said Nelly, frankly.

"Not invited!" he echoed. "How did that happen?"

"It happened that she did n't want me," laughed Nelly. "I do n't know her very well. But of course you will go. It is real kind of you to offer to take me, but I can get there some other way just as well."

"If you are not going to the party, there is no reason why we can 't go as we planned," he declared.

"You must go to the party," said Nelly decidedly, as they paused before Miss Augusta's door.

"I can send my regrets."

"That would never do," said Nelly, shaking her head. "She would never forgive you."

"Will you be ready at seven?" asked George, with his old saucy smile.

"O George," said Nelly, with a troubled face, "you must not stay away from the party to take me up there. I'll never forgive myself for saying anything to you about it."

"I do n't care a rush for the party, and would enjoy a sleigh-ride with you ten per cent more; so do n't think any more about it, but get your jellies and things ready, and we will be off by seven. Good-bye," and, raising his cap with a merry smile to Mrs. Jackson, whom he saw at the window, he turned away and went down-street.

Miss Sibyl Winterbourn was very much surprised to encounter their boarder in the hall after tea, getting himself into a long ulster coat reaching nearly to his heels.

"Will you be so kind as to take my regrets to Mrs. Buckman, Miss Winterbourn?" he asked.

"Why, are n't you going?" she asked with secret regret.

"No, and if you will excuse me to Mrs. Buckman I will be much obliged."

"Have you got to go somewhere on business, Mr. Arlington?" asked Sibyl. "It is too bad. Could n't you postpone it? Mrs. Buckman will be so disappointed."

"Unfortunately I can't be in two places at once," said George, "so Mrs. Buckman will have to bear her disappointment as best she can."

"Is your other engagement so very important?" asked Sibyl, coaxingly. "Could n't you break it?"

"No," said George, pulling on his gloves. "I promised to be at a certain place at seven, and must keep my word."

"If it is anything to do with the business I am sure papa would let you off," said Sibyl innocently.

"No doubt he would," replied George, "but it is not in your father's power to release me from this engagement."

"It is too bad you can 't go," said Sibyl regretfully, "for Mrs. Buckman's parties are always delightful."

"Thank you for your kind wishes, Miss Winterbourn; I am sorry Mrs. Buckman wasted one of her invitations on me. I hope you will have a good time. Good night."

She returned his good night with a bright smile, which changed to a frown as the door closed upon him and she went up to her own room.

"I'd give ten dollars to know where he has gone. He is so provokingly mysterious I can't find out a thing about him. It is too mean for anything, for I thought I was going to have him for my escort to-night; but I sha'n't let him spoil my fun; there are plenty other men left in the world," and with this praiseworthy determination to put up with the second-best, Miss Winterbourn began to dress for the party.

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE TEN TALENTS

HERE we are at last, Nelly! This is the house."

"Well I am glad! Now if you will please unpack me, and, oh, be careful of that basket! Are you sure it is right side up?"

"Right side up with care, and so are you," said George, as he pulled away the fur robes and helped Nelly out of the sleigh.

They had had a serious time finding the place, but after inquiring their way several times they had reached their destination, a small, bare, unpainted house, with a look of what New Englanders call "shiftlessness" about it.

When Nelly and her belongings were all out of the sleigh, and the horse carefully covered up, George shouldered the basket and they presented themselves at the door. A spiritless looking woman ushered them into the kitchen, the only room in which there was a fire, and set

chairs for them by the cooking-stove. The sick girl was in a small bed-room adjoining.

The sink was piled full of dirty dishes, the floor littered with dirt, but the woman seemed past caring for anything, and, making no apologies, she picked up her baby and sat down opposite her guests.

George set his basket on the floor, then, retreating to the window, opened a conversation with a group of small boys and girls, who shyly regarded their visitors with their fingers in their mouths. The baby began to cry and hid his face on his mother's shoulder.

"He's afraid of strangers," Mrs. Black explained. "There! there! Johnny, look up; the lady is n't going to hurt you."

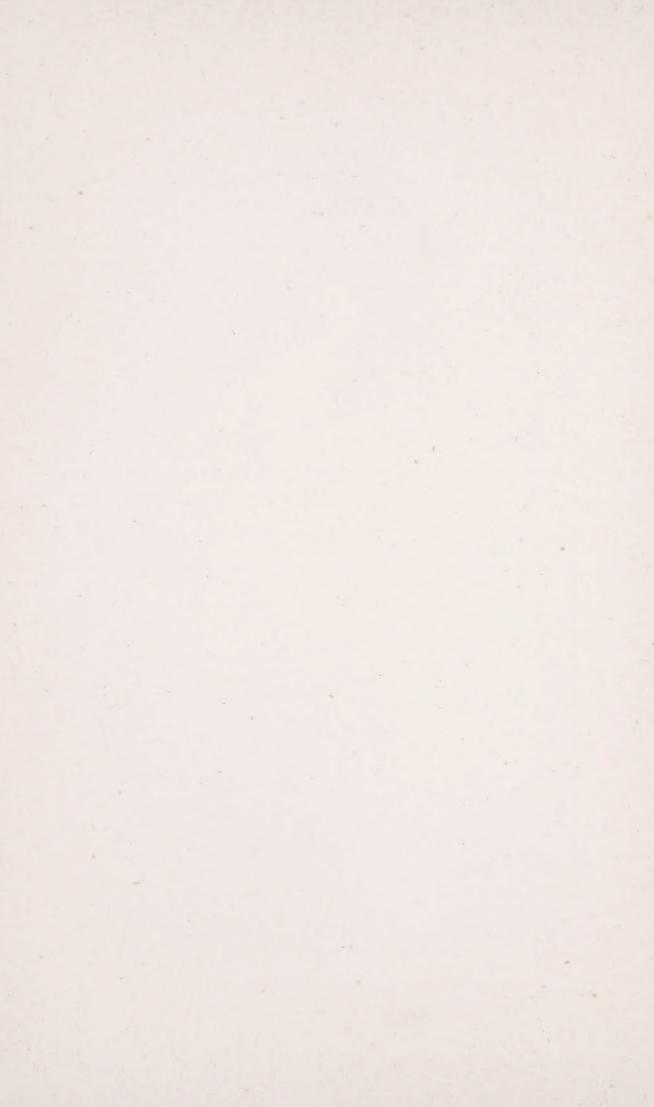
"I am Ada's teacher," Nelly explained, "and have come out to see how she is."

"Are you Miss Jackson?" said Mrs. Black in surprise. "I have heard her speak of you often. She liked you and Mr. Allen awful well, and feels dreadfully about losing her schooling. There! there! Johnny, do keep still; I'm ashamed of you!"

"How is Ada?" asked Nelly, when Johnny's cries were hushed so that she could be heard.



"ARE YOU MISS JACKSON?"



"She 's asleep now," said Mrs. Black, glancing into the bed-room. "She 'll be awfully disappointed not to see you, but I hate to wake her up. She 's dreadful sick and I do n't know what to do for her."

"Did n't the doctor leave any directions?"

"He ain't been here; that 's the trouble. I've sent for him two or three times, but he ain't been near. I suppose he 's afraid he would n't be paid, and I do n't know as he would," and the poor woman heaved a deep sigh, and then continued to hush young Johnny's wails, for that youngster seemed to realize the fact that he had entered on a vale of tears.

"Which doctor did you send for?" asked Nelly.

"The new one, Dr. Farnsworth. They called him when Ada was taken sick, and they say he 's awful smart. I thought if he 'd come once and tell me what to do for Ada I 'd get along alone, but he ain't been near."

At that moment Frank Farnsworth, who was making his best bow to Mrs. Buckman and apologizing for being late on account of a small boy who had been so inconsiderate as to break his arm and send for him to set it, fell, in Nelly

Jackson's estimation, even lower than he was before he promised her so faithfully to go and see the sick girl, and not charge anything for the visit.

"I'll never believe in him again," thought she indignantly; aloud she said: "Why did n't you send for Dr. Thornton? He would have come."

"I know it, but we ain't paid him for the visits he made when I was sick, and I did n't have the face to."

Nelly was silent, but she mentally vowed to see Dr. Thornton the next day and tell him about the sick girl. If he promised to go and see her she knew he would keep his word.

"I am sorry Ada is asleep," said she, "but it would be a pity to disturb her. I brought some things for her in that basket; if you will please empty them I will take the dishes back."

Young Johnny, however, would not be put down, but screamed and wiggled like a little eel, crying: "Ma—ma!" when his mother besought him to be a good boy and let her take care of the things the kind lady had brought to sick sister, and when the kind lady tried to coax him to let her hold him, he screamed at such an alarming rate that Nelly was afraid she had frightened him into spasms.

At last a puny little maiden of ten persuaded Master Johnny to come to her, and, perching on a hard wooden chair, her feet swinging several inches from the floor, the thin, pinched-looking little girl held the lusty young infant, making one of the saddest pictures the eye has ever seen. Poor little girl! she had grown up with a weak back because she was one of the oldest of a large family of children.

Mrs. Black put away the good things Nelly's basket contained, handing back the empty dishes, and as there was nothing more she could do, Nelly rose and began to fasten up her wraps.

"Ada will be awfully disappointed when I tell her that you have been here," said Mrs. Black.

"Tell her I'll come again," said Nelly. "Perhaps I can ride up with Dr. Thornton some day."

"I'll bring you any time, Nelly," said George quickly.

Poor fellow! his warm generous heart had been aching ever since he had been there, but, manlike, he could think of nothing to do except leave something behind him. When he and Nelly had left the house the eldest boy came running up to his mother with a wad of something in his hand.

"See," said he triumphantly, "the man gave it to me and said I could get a pair of boots with red tops to 'em like Tommy Bryant's. Can I, ma?"

His mother took the little wad, and, unfolding it, disclosed a ten-dollar bill.

"Did the gentleman give that to you?" she asked, hardly able to believe her eyes.

"Yes, he did," the boy declared. "He asked me what I wanted more than anything else and I told him a pair of boots with red tops, and he gave me that and told me to give it to the storeman and I would get the boots. It 's mine, ain't it, ma? Let me keep it."

"No, you can't have it," said the poor bewildered woman, "I must hide it where your father won't find it; and mind you do n't tell him about the gentleman's giving you anything, for if he gets hold of it every cent will go for drink."

Seeing the glorious vision of the red-topped boots about to vanish, the eldest heir of the family of Black set up a howl in which his brother Johnny lustily joined, and their united efforts waking the sick girl, the poor mother's hands were full; but in spite of the confusion her

heart was lighter than it had been for some time. If George had realized that the poor woman had not a cent of money to her name, he would have given the small boy twenty dollars instead of ten to be invested in red-topped boots.

George and Nelly were both silent as they drove away from the poor little house. The white road, packed hard and smooth with snow, stretched out before them, deserted except for a house with lights in the front windows now and then outlined against the sky. No sound broke the stillness but the musical jingle of the bells, as the horse trotted along, tossing his head every once in awhile as though he was enjoying the moonlight drive as much as his driver.

Nelly was the first to break the silence with a long-drawn sigh.

"What is it, Nelly?" asked George, looking down into her face which was very grave and sober in the moonlight.

"When I see people in distress I always carry away a burden," she replied. "There is so much suffering in the world I feel sometimes as though I had no right to be happy."

"We can't set all the wrong right, Nelly," said George soberly. "We can only do our part." "My part is so small," said Nelly with another sigh. "I can do so little."

"Suppose that you felt that your part ought to be considerable? That a good deal was expected of you?" George replied.

"What do you mean?" asked Nelly. "We can only do a little at best; none of us can set all the wrong right."

"Yes, but do n't you suppose the fellow with the ten talents felt a great responsibility?"

"If he did he could only use them so that they would gain all they could."

"But suppose he had kept the whole ten in a napkin, as the other fellow did, what a great wrong he would have committed. Do you know, Nell, I think sometimes I would rather have but one."

"The responsibility would be as great," said Nelly quickly.

"Yes," said George slowly, "but how much worse it would be to bury ten talents than just one; that is what I am afraid of doing. You know grandfather left me all his property."

"Have you buried it in a napkin?" asked Nelly, laughing.

"No, but what troubles me is what to do with

my money. I do n't feel as though I ought to lie back and just enjoy myself because I am rich. If we are Christians ought we not to consecrate our pocket-books as well as our hearts to the Lord?"

"Of course we ought," said Nelly decidedly.

"How to do it is the question that is troubling me," George continued. "When grandfather died they all expected me to travel about; mother and Violet were all ready to accompany me to Europe, but it did n't seem to me that I ought merely to enjoy myself and let my money lie idle, though how to put it where it would do good was a puzzle. I could walk about the streets of New York and give away a pocket full to street beggars, and sign my name to subscription-papers every day, but that did n't seem just the right thing, and I was a long while coming to a decision."

"Then you have come to one," said Nelly eagerly. "Have you made your property over to an orphan asylum and come here to earn your own living?"

"No; I have n't given away even a tenth of my income," he replied, "I'm going to tell you my secret. No one knows it here but Mr. Winterbourn, but I am going to tell you, for I want you to help me."

"What is it, George?" said Nelly eagerly. "Will it be a very hard secret to keep?"

"It won't burden you much. I made up my mind to tell you as soon as I learned you were here, for I want you to help me. Winterbourn is no good in the things I want help in most."

"Please do n't keep me in suspense, George," pleaded Nelly. "I feel the way I do when I read one number of a serial story."

"It is nothing very exciting," he replied; "it is only that I have invested part of my property in these mills, and am sole owner."

"Why, George!" exclaimed Nelly, "you could n't tell me anything more startling. How did you come to do it? And why are you here as timekeeper? I am a regular interrogation point."

"You know the company failed because the demand gave out and the mills paid no profits. They kept cutting down the wages until at last the men could n't earn enough to support their families, then they shut down, and the mills would have been left to decay like the one I set fire to in Exeter."

"How did you come to know about it?" asked Nelly eagerly.

"I saw in the papers how the closing of the mills had given this town its death-blow, and how many men were turned out of employment, and it suddenly occurred to me that that was the work for me. You see, Nell, every town has to have business or it will die. This town was without business only a year, but it went down rapidly. There was no ready money; every one was afraid to trust every one, and the working-class suffered terribly."

"So you put money into the mills for the sake of the place," exclaimed Nelly. "O George, how splendid of you!"

"Every one in this country is for making money," he continued. "This business had no market value because every one knew it was not a paying concern; but I do n't need to make money; if it pays for itself that is all I care for. What I want is to be able to furnish people with work, for that is the best thing we can do for any one."

"It is just splendid of you, George," said Nelly warmly. "Mamma will be so glad and proud when I tell her. I may tell her, may I not?"

"Yes, of course; I want you to tell her. I am

coming in some evening to lay all my plans before you both."

"She said when you were expelled that she should n't give you up," laughed Nelly.

"When I look at my mills I feel that I have partly redeemed that mischief," said George soberly. "I don't regret it, for it taught me a good lesson."

"But why are you playing the prince in disguise?" asked Nelly; "hiring out to your own concern?"

"I want to keep in the dark so that I can look about me. I want to do something beside furnish people with work."

"If all rich men felt as you do, George," said Nelly, "a great deal that is wrong in this world would be righted."

"Winterbourn thinks I am more than half a fool," laughed George, "when I tell him what I want done; but I mean that a new order of things shall be brought about if it takes me a lifetime to do it."

"What are the changes you want to make, George?" asked Nelly eagerly.

"Have you been down on Water Street?" asked George.

"No, indeed," she replied. "I wanted to go down there one evening and see one of my scholars who was sick, but Joe would n't let me, and as I have n't much time during the day I did n't go at all."

"Joe was right; it is no place for a lady, especially in the evening. Every other door is a saloon."

"If you can banish them you will be in demand in every town and city in the United States."

"I do n't suppose I can banish them," said George sadly, "but what I want to put down, if I can, is the use of liquor among my work-people; for I do n't want my money to go for rum, and will not give employment to men who drink up their wages and cause their families to suffer."

"Are there many who do that?" asked Nelly.

"I have taken some statistics since I have been here," he replied, "and have found that twothirds of the men working in the mill are married, and of those over half drink."

"Are they good workmen?" asked Nelly.

"A man who drinks can't be first-class at anything," George replied decidedly. "If those men were sober they could hold superior positions and get much better wages." "What can you do?" asked Nelly. "Do you know that sometimes the liquor question seems hopeless to me?"

"There is only one thing I can think of. I mean to employ only temperance men. That is the plan I have now, and I am here as time-keeper so that I can get acquainted with the workmen and find out what sort of men they are."

"You have n't finished your statistics," said Nelly. "Half of the married men drink; what about the single?"

"With them I had almost a Sodom experience," he replied, "for I was afraid I could not find ten temperance fellows. They all drink a little, beer in summer to keep them cool and in winter to keep them warm, and occasional glasses of whisky all the year round. But, really, there are a number of fine, good fellows in the mills, only they keep quiet as to their principles because temperance is so very unpopular."

"I feel tempted to echo my old wish," said Nelly. "Oh that I were a boy so that I could help!"

"You can help a hundred times more by being a young woman," said George quickly.

"I don't see how," said she dolefully. "I can't help those young men."

"But you can help me," George declared. 'You don't know how thankful I am that I found you here in Dedham! I hadn't forgotten you, Nell, if you had me, for somehow you never seemed like other girls."

"You must tell me what I can do, George," said Nelly meekly, "for I really want to help."

"If you can't help young men you can young women," said George. "You know there is a girls' boarding-house connected with the mills; have you noticed it?"

"Yes, and often thought what an unpleasant place it must be; right in the street, without a bush or a tree near it."

"I'm not satisfied with it at all," George replied. "It is just a put-up place for the girls, and has nothing attractive or homelike about it."

"Where do they spend their evenings?" asked Nelly.

"That I do n't know. They do n't go to the saloons, but the young men from the saloons go to them, so the influence reaches them just the same."

"Why, George!" said Nelly suddenly, "some

of those girls go to our Christian Endeavor Society. One evening we were gathered round the register getting warm when two or three girls came in who attracted my attention because they laughed and talked rather loudly, so I asked who they were, and some one said: 'Oh, they are some of the mill girls from the boarding house.'"

"That is just it," said George, indignantly; "they are looked down upon. I warrant not one of the members do more than bow to them, and some do n't even do that, and yet those girls go to the meetings, probably to get some good, and want help."

"I was honored by being put on the Social Committee," said Nelly decidedly, "and I am going to get acquainted with those girls. I don't know as they will feel particularly honored, for I am only an insignificant schoolma'am, but I'll show them that I want to be friends."

"Do you know Sibyl Winterbourn?" asked George abruptly.

"No," Nelly replied, "but I have seen her."

George was silent for a few minutes. Whatever his thoughts were in regard to his superintendent's daughter, he did not make them known. "Have you enjoyed this ride, Nelly?" he asked, as they turned into Main Street.

"Of course I have," she replied. "It was so good of you to take me. I can never thank you."

"Do n't try," said George, jumping out of the sleigh as he reached Miss Stone's. "I'm glad I have had a chance to tell you my secret. I am coming to you whenever I want help; may I?"

"Yes, indeed, I shall be glad to help you all I can."

"I shall come often, then. Good night, now." And, after watching Nelly run up the steps, George got into the sleigh and drove away.

## CHAPTER XVII

MISS WINTERBOURN'S ATTEMPT AT MISSION-ARY WORK

MISS SIBYL WINTERBOURN was not a young lady of benevolent inclinations, and had never taken any interest in charity work. She had not troubled herself about other people as long as she had plenty of money and leisure to indulge in her favorite pursuits and pleasures. But lately she had taken a sudden interest in the poor people around Dedham, especially those connected with the mills. She took to going to their houses, inquiring into the state of the children's wardrobes, leaving shoes, stockings, and clothing with a lavish hand.

At first the people stood rather in awe of this stylish young lady, but as time went on, those who believe in getting all they can out of other people imposed upon her, making large demands on her charity, while the sensitive poor, whom it

is so hard to help, resented her calls and the manner with which she made her offerings.

It often happened that the round of charity-calls Miss Winterbourn made with her horse and sleigh ended at the mills, and as she usually drew rein just as the whistle blew she was just in time to pick up the timekeeper and carry him home. She entertained him during the drive with accounts of the calls she had made, and was so much in earnest that George often felt condemned for the opinion he had formed of her when they first met.

Sibyl gathered a class of little street Arabs into the Sunday-school, but was considerably puzzled after she got them there as to what she should do with them. It was easy enough to get shoes for Billy and Tommy, tell their mothers to mend their jackets and send them to Sunday-school, but when she had them in a row before her, with their round eyes fixed on her face, she had not the remotest idea what to say to them, and if her mysterious boarder had not been so interested in her attempt to convert the young heathen, she would have left them unmolested to pursue the evil of their ways. But George was looking on, so she must do what she could. Standing up

before them, she began to ask the questions on the lesson-leaf. The boys stared, whispered, giggled, and nudged each other, but not one of them made any attempt to answer.

"Freddy Bangs," said Sibyl severely, addressing the first boy in the row, "do n't you know who David was, or what position he occupied?"

"No, ma'am, unless he was President of the United States," said this new object of missionary effort.

It would have done Sibyl good to have boxed the ears of the young scamp, but that was not customary in Sabbath-school teaching, no matter how successful it might prove, so she persevered, going through the list of questions, firmly resolved never to do it again, no matter how much interest their boarder showed in such good works, for the boys talked out loud, made impudent replies, cracked peanuts, throwing the shells at each other and the boys in neighboring classes, until the attention of the whole school was attracted to them, and Sibyl's face was flushed with shame and anger.

As soon as the school was dismissed Sibyl went straight to the superintendent.

"I can 't teach those boys," said she. "I got them into the school, but some one else must teach them."

"You did have a hard time this morning," said the gentleman kindly. "It requires tact to manage such boys, Miss Winterbourn."

"I do n't care to be insulted every Sunday by a row of impudent boys. If you know any one who does, you can give them the class."

"I wonder how Miss Jackson would do?" said the superintendent thoughtfully.

"Miss Jackson?" repeated Sibyl.

"Yes, she knows how to manage boys; the high-school scholars all adore her."

"But she has a class."

"Any one can take those little girls of hers," said the gentleman. "If you do n't mind, I would like to try her with those boys."

"I do n't care who takes them," Sibyl replied, "as long as I do n't have to go near them again."

"Very well; then I will speak to Miss Jackson and ask her to take the class. You have done your part in gathering them in."

George was full of sympathy with Sibyl, who

had gotten over her anger and was ready to laugh over her failure when she met him.

"My talents do not lie in the direction of small boys," said she. "I'm afraid they do not appreciate the attention I paid them."

"They ought not to be lost hold of," said George. "They ought to have a teacher and be kept in the school."

"Oh, yes," replied Sibyl. "I should not let them go after the pains I have taken to get them. Mr. Perkins thought Miss Jackson might be a good one to take them; she is used to teaching, you know."

"I'm glad he thought of her," said George, his face lighting up. "She will hold on to them and do them good if any one can."

"No doubt she will know how to manage them," said Sibyl, "for I suppose she is used to impudent boys."

"It would n't be well for the high-school boys to be impudent to her in Joe's hearing," laughed George.

"Of course there is a wide step between the high-school boys and those Arabs," said Sibyl. "I meant that Miss Jackson had probably encountered some pretty rough specimens in her

district-school teaching. She is a poor girl, I believe, and, of course, has not always taught in places like our high-school."

"I think she is just the one to manage those boys," said George quietly, "and would be if she had not taught a day of school in her life."

"Are you much acquainted with her?" asked Sibyl curiously.

"I have known her some time," he replied briefly. Somehow he never cared to talk about Nelly with Sibyl.

"I have not met her," said Sibyl smoothly, "but I should like to very much."

George made no comment on this, and Sibyl was unable to learn from him anything concerning his past acquaintance with the high-school assistant.

A few days after, Sibyl, in her sleigh, turned the corner and drove slowly to the mills. The whistle had just blown, and the hands were pouring out, women and girls throwing on their outside garments as they hurried along, for they had only an hour at noon. Instead of merely eating their dinners, they swallowed their food as quickly as possible, for there was always a little washing, ironing or mending which they counted on their nooning to finish. There was no lingering over the table to chat, with any of the mill-hands.

As they hurried along, many cast envious, spiteful glances at the slowly-moving sleigh, and its stylish young lady driver; for Mr. Winterbourn was not beloved by the work-people, and they did not see why his daughter should ride while they walked, be a fine lady while they were looked down upon as mill-hands; for such is the perversity of Americans, they will believe that all men ought to be free and equal, in spite of everything to the contrary.

Right at the heels of the mill-hands was a group of boys.

"Holloa, teacher!" bawled out one of the urchins. "What you going to give me for goin' to Sunday-school?"

"I want somethin' on the Christmas-tree," yelled another. "I ain't agoin' to Sunday-school for nothin'."

"I ain't agoin' to learn no verse," chimed in a third.

Sibyl checked her horse, her face flushed with anger.

"Boys," said she, "do n't you know better than to speak to a lady that way on the street?" "We do n't know nothin'," they shouted in reply. "We do n't care about your David; he 's slow. Give us suthin' about Bill Jarvis, the Detective, if you want to fetch us."

"I shall not do anything for you after this," said Sibyl angrily, "if I can 't meet you on the street without being insulted. You are an impudent, disgusting set of boys."

As she gathered up her reins to drive on, a snowball whizzed by her head, just grazing the brim of her hat, but a second did not follow, for the urchin who threw it was suddenly seized from the rear by the coat-collar, suspended in the air for a few seconds, then ignominiously landed in a snowbank alongside of the road.

"Do n't you know any better than to throw snowballs at a lady?" demanded George, looking threateningly down on the boy. "It is well for you there is n't a policeman in sight, or you would be handed over to him before you could tell whether you were on your head or your heels."

The rest of the young scamps had vanished with the agility for which their class is famous, but the one George had collared lay meekly on his back looking up in the young man's face.

"It did n't hit her," he explained. "It shied right by her hat."

"You had better think twice before you shy another one, or you will find yourself in the lockup some fine day. Now off with you, and bear in mind what I say."

George picked him up out of the snowbank, and with another shake dismissed him—a sadder and wiser boy.

Sibyl welcomed George with her brightest smile as she beckoned for him to take a seat in the sleigh.

"I do n't know what I should have done if you had not come along, Mr. Arlington," said she. "I do n't know that you saved my life, but you certainly did my hat, for another of my hopeful pupils had one all ready to send, which might not have shied by."

"Lawless little imps!" said George. "It did me good to shake him. I wish I could have seized them all."

"I shall warn Miss Jackson to avoid this street if she takes the class. Do you think it is possible to civilize them, Mr. Arlington?"

"Oh yes," said George cheerfully. "They are bright little scamps; something can be made of them." "I am utterly discouraged," said Sibyl, with a sigh, "for nothing I do or say has any effect on them."

"That shaking will have an effect on that youngster," laughed George. "It will do him as much good as a Sunday-school lesson."

"I don't know what I should have done if you had not come to my rescue," said Sibyl with a grateful glance.

"I'm glad I happened to come along," he replied. "It did me good to administer the shaking."

Mr. Perkins made it his especial business to see Miss Jackson and ask her to take the class they had gathered out of the by-ways and hedges.

"Do you really want me to take them?" she asked eagerly.

"Yes; Miss Winterbourn gathered them into the school and intended to teach them, but her talents do not lie in that direction. She doesn't like boys and has given up the class. We don't want to lose them, so I make bold to ask you to take them, Miss Jackson. It will be quite an undertaking, and I should not blame you if you refused after you saw Miss Winterbourn's trials last Sunday."

"Why, Mr. Perkins," exclaimed Nelly, "I would like nothing better than to have that class. I rather envied Miss Winterbourn last Sunday."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," said the superintendent in a relieved tone. "Honestly, they are not so bad if they are managed right."

"I like boys," replied Nelly, "and have had considerable experience with them, so am not easily shocked."

The superintendent thanked her again, then took his departure, congratulating himself that Miss Winterbourn had sense enough to resign the class when she found out she could not teach it.

The next Sunday every boy was in his place, on the lookout for more fun, and many cast curious glances in their direction, and exchanged comments on those horrid boys in the corner.

Before he opened the school Mr. Perkins escorted Nelly to the class and introduced her as their teacher. The boys received her with stares, making no reply to her pleasant greeting, but during the opening exercises exchanged comments freely among themselves.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I say, we 've got a new one to-day."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Ain't quite so fine as t' other one."

"We boosted her last Sunday. Won't ketch her coming here again asking us questions about David."

"We'll scare this one off to-day, and have a new one every week."

Possibly these boys were rather proud of the honor paid them by the young ladies; but if they were in hopes of being treated to a new teacher every Sunday they were disappointed, for Nelly was not scared off, but remained bravely at her post.

A good many looked over to the class in the corner and wondered what Miss Jackson was saying to keep those boys so quiet. Mr. Perkins beamed with satisfaction, and, going up to Miss Winterbourn, who was watching her successor in missionary labor, whispered:

"You see I was right; I knew she could tame them."

She had certainly tamed them, but how she did it was a mystery. George glanced at her every once in a while, and wished he could hear what she was saying. She had neither Bible nor lesson-leaf, but sat in the midst of the boys, talking earnestly, while they, in not very elegant lounging attitudes, listened to every word she was saying.

Nelly would not have cared to have had any one listen to her, for it might have shocked some people to have heard a Sunday-school teacher telling her class about Jean Valjean, the convict, and the old bishop from whom he stole the silver, instead of King David and little Samuel. But when Nelly sat down with her class, and asked if any of them could tell her what the lesson was about, they declared they did n't know anything about the Bible, and would n't listen to anything from it. It was too slow for young gentlemen who fed their imaginations on the adventures of "Merciless Ben, the Hair Lifter."

"Very well," said Nelly quietly, "I will tell you about something that is not in the Bible," and immediately launched into a graphic description of the first scene in Victor Hugo's greatest novel.

The boys listened spellbound, and when the story was finished a free discussion was opened by Freddy Bangs declaring that the bishop was an old fool. Nelly let them freely express their opinions, but turned the discussion into a new channel by asking if they did not suppose the bishop would willingly part with his silver for

the sake of a bad man becoming good. "Is n't a man's character worth more than silver or gold?" she asked.

The discussion was very interesting, and the opinions advanced were both shrewd and sharp; but before the bell rang for silence they had all come to the conclusion that Jean Valjean's soul was worth more than the bishop's silver spoons and candlesticks.

As soon as the school closed Mr. Perkins and George both came to congratulate Nelly on her success; and seeing George talking to the high-school assistant, Sibyl made haste to join them. George introduced the two young ladies, and Sibyl exclaimed:

"I'm so glad you lived through the session, Miss Jackson! Those dreadful boys nearly killed me last Sunday."

"Why, they are not very bad," said Nelly smiling. "They might be ever so much worse."

"You completely charmed them," said Mr. Perkins. "I expect they will be transformed into model Sunday-school scholars in a few weeks."

"Do n't set your hopes very high," said Nelly.
"I have n't really done anything yet, only made

a beginning by interesting them so that they will want to come again."

"That is just what we want," said the superintendent warmly. "You 'll do, Miss Jackson," and with a gay nod he left them."

## CHAPTER XVIII

NELLY'S EFFORT ON THE SOCIAL COMMITTEE

ARE you going out this evening, Miss Jackson?" asked Miss Augusta as she entered her neighbor's room after tea one night, and found Nelly arrayed in her best gown.

"Yes, and I was going to ask you if you could n't bring your sewing in here and sit with mamma so that she won't be lonesome?"

"Nelly thinks I'm not to be trusted alone," said Mrs. Jackson, smiling. "I would be very glad to have you, Miss Stone. No matter if you do leave a few cuttings and bastings on the floor; they are easily swept up."

"Where are you going, Miss Jackson?" asked the dressmaker, seating herself before the open Franklin.

"I am going to the church parlors," replied Nelly. "Our Endeavor Society is going to give a Whittier evening. Each member replies to his

name with a verse of poetry from Whittier, and morning, noon and night the boys have come to my desk for me to find them two lines; none of them are willing to say more than that."

Chatting merrily Nelly got into her wraps, and bidding the ladies good-bye, she started for the vestry.

The Endeavor Society had socials once a month, but this was the first one Nelly had attended since she had been honored by being on the Social Committee, and, remembering her talk with George, she determined to try a plan she had been thinking about for some time. A number of the girls from the mills, and some who did work in people's kitchens, belonged to the society, but at the socials they usually kept in a group by themselves looking on at the others. Sibyl Winterbourn said they could not do anything with that class of people, but Nelly meant to try and see if something could not be done, though she said nothing of her plan to any one, for she had no intimate girl friends in Dedham.

The large room was bare of furniture, except a row of seats placed along the wall, and as they soon filled up it was quite an ordeal to cross from one side to the other.

"If there is anything the Dedham people need to learn," said Nelly to Joe, "it is how to conduct a social."

The young schoolmaster hated socials as much as he did parties, and only a strong sense of duty caused him to attend one.

"It struck me that they are a trifle worse here than they are elsewhere," he replied.

"They are dreadful!" declared Nelly. "What idiot do you suppose arranged these seats? We look like a row of wallflowers."

"George is the only one who has courage to stand up and move about. I wish I knew how to manage my arms and legs as well as he does," and Joe heaved a sigh of envy as he watched his friend, who was being consulted by Miss Winterbourn on some question of importance.

"There is a row of our boys down by the door, twiddling their thumbs and trying to appear at their ease. I'm going to talk to them, and it is really your duty, Joe, to go and make yourself agreeable to that bashful little Miss Snow."

"It is not my duty," said Joe solemnly, "for I am as bashful as she is, and we would only both be more uncomfortable. George is the one you ought to send on that errand."

But Nelly had not spoken to George during the evening, and, instead of following Joe's advice, she went to the boys, who welcomed her with delight; for Miss Jackson was a great favorite with her scholars. She staid with them while the poems were being read and recited, and the quotations given; then, when the refreshments had broken the ice a little, she made her way back to Joe.

- "Suppose we show these people what our idea of a social is," said she.
  - "What do you mean?" he asked.
- "Do you see those girls lining the other side of the room? They all work in the mills, or wash the dishes in some one's kitchen, and the young ladies and gentlemen on this side of the room have hardly spoken to them. What I want to do is to mix them all up together."
- "How are you going to do it?" asked Joe, doubtfully.
- "That is where I want your help. Do you remember a game we used to play when we were young, called Boston Exchange?"
- "They blindfold a poor victim, and then make him catch one or two other victims; do n't they?"

"That is it," said Nelly. "It is not an intellectual game, but it is all the better for mixing purposes. Now I want you to help me start it."

"Why don't you ask George?" objected Joe. "He can do it better than I can."

"You must not try to shift your responsibilities on to George," said Nelly, gravely. "It is your duty, Joe, to help me start the game, and be first blindman."

Joe heaved a comical sigh, but made no further objections, and with the aid of the high school boys, who entered into the game with spirit, they got the seats pushed into the centre of the room, so as to form a square.

Nelly went up to the girls for whose sake she was making the effort, and, explaining the game, asked them to join. They were ready for anything, and, with the high school boys, filled up half the seats, while the rest of the young people looked on in surprise at these arrangements. George had not been in Nelly's vicinity for the evening, for somehow Miss Winterbourn had engaged most of his attention, but when he saw her pushing a seat into place, he sprang to her assistance, asking:

"What are you planning, Nelly?"

"We are going to play Boston Exchange," she explained.

"We used to play that in old Exeter, did n't we?" said he eagerly. "It will seem like old times."

Thanks to George, Nelly's plan was a success, for, seeing Mr. Arlington entering into it, the others were ready to join, and Sibyl Winterbourn came up to Nelly, asking curiously:

"What is it? Blindman's buff?"

Nelly explained the game, and the young lady said patronizingly:

"I never played anything of the kind in my life, but I will to-night just for the novelty of it."

"Are you ready, Nelly?" asked George, who had tied the handkerchief over his own eyes, to Joe's great satisfaction.

"In a minute," Nelly replied. "Wait till I number them."

That done, the game commenced, and proved a success, for those who had treated the idea with contempt at first, got interested in spite of themselves, and in their desire not to get caught, they looked to every one for help, and were mixed up quite to Nelly's satisfaction.

"Are you satisfied?" asked Joe, as Nelly sank breathlessly into a seat by his side.

"Yes, I am," she replied, "for they have really got waked up. Do see Miss Winterbourn run! I did n't know she could do such a thing."

They broke up at a late hour, merry and breathless, and went home declaring it to be the best social they had ever attended.

"That was a good idea of yours, Nelly," said George. "I do n't know when I've had such a good time. It reminded me of the gay old parties we used to have at Exeter."

"Yes," said Sibyl, joining them, looking very pretty in the white evening hood which she had thrown over her dark hair. "Every one is saying what a nice social it has been, and I think it must be because you started that game, Miss Jackson. It was a little rough, but I suppose it just suited some who were here. Mr. Arlington, will you be so kind as to carry home a basket for me? It has dishes in it and is quite heavy."

George followed in the direction Sibyl beckoned, and Nelly turned away, feeling a little disappointed that she could not talk it over with George, for it had been for the sake of helping in the work he was trying to do, that she had made an effort to cause the girls from the mills to enjoy the Christian Endeavor social.

A few days after the social there came a tap at the recitation-room door. Thinking one of her scholars was wanted, Nelly opened it, book in hand, to find a tall, stylish young lady, with roguish dark eyes, standing in the hall. Nelly stared for a moment, and then, with a little cry, seized hold of her with both hands.

"Violet Arlington! Is it really you?"

"Yes, it is I, Nell," she replied, "and I am glad I have found you at last, for I have blundered round, in search of you, into all sorts of odd places."

"Where did you come from? Oh dear!" said Nelly, suddenly remembering her class, who were looking on at the meeting, greatly interested, "I can't talk now, but come in and sit down where I can look at you."

Nelly returned to her class, but having Violet where she could look at her rather took her mind off poor John Bunyan, the subject of the literature lesson. To think that Violet, actually, dear old Violet, was sitting there before her! How handsome she looked in her stylish suit! Everything was perfect about her from the dainty

little hat to the patent-leather tips of her narrow little shoes. Never was the bell from the schoolroom recalling the class more welcome to Nelly than it was that morning.

"You dear creature! Where did you come from?" cried Nelly, rushing up to Violet the moment the last scholar left the room.

"I was determined to surprise you all, and I did," said Violet gleefully. "But is this the way you teach, Nelly,—you up-stairs and Joe down?"

"Yes, I have all my recitations here. How did you find your way up?"

"Oh, I blundered along," she replied, laughing. "First I knocked at the schoolroom door, and out came Joe. I should n't have known him anywhere else, he has changed so. He stared as though he saw a ghost, and blurted out: 'Are you Violet Arlington?' then blushed as red as a rooster, and stammered, 'Miss Arlington, I mean.'"

"Poor Joe!" laughed Nelly. "I don't wonder he blushed and stammered."

"Is he as bashful as ever?"

"No, he is just as nice as he can be. Did you go into the schoolroom, Vi? He is a fine teacher."

"No, I inquired for you, and he sent me up

here, but I blundered first into the laboratory where two youths stared me out of countenance, and then into a hall. What a fine establishment you have here!"

"Yes, but how happened you to come here?"

"That girl George boards with took to writing to me, and gave me such a pressing invitation to make her a visit that I thought I would accept, and walked in upon them last night. No one knew I was coming but Sibyl. She is real nice; is n't she?"

"Yes," Nelly assented, but not very warmly. She could not admire Sibyl Winterbourn.

The next class coming in put an end to the conversation. Violet remained in the recitation-room all the morning watching Nelly teach her classes in the thorough, whole-hearted manner which marks the true teacher. At noon they found Joe waiting for them in the hall below, and the three left the schoolhouse together.

"Does n't it seem like old times?" exclaimed Nelly. "We can almost imagine that we have just left Exeter Academy. I am so glad to see you again, Violet!"

"I am glad somebody is glad to see me," said Violet, with a laugh. "That brother of mine, instead of being overwhelmed with joy when I walked in upon him last night, just stared for a moment to make sure that I was substantial flesh and blood, then coolly wanted to know what I had come for."

"No doubt he was glad to see you," said Joe, "if he did take your arrival so calmly."

"No, I do n't think he was," said Violet frankly.

"He does n't want me here, but I am going to stay just the same."

"Never mind," said Nelly in a comforting tone, "the rest of us want you whether he does or not. Won't you come home to dinner with me? Mamma will be so glad to see you."

"I would like to, ever so much," said Violet frankly, "but I'm afraid Sibyl would n't like it. She did n't want me to go down to school this morning, but I could n't live another minute without seeing you. I told George last night that I had come to see you and not him, so I did n't care whether he wanted me or not."

Nelly did not urge Violet to come with her, for she felt that Violet, as the guest of Sibyl Winterbourn, could not give her all the time she wanted. Years bring about many changes, but Nelly felt that it was Sibyl Winterbourn and not the lapse of time, that stood between her and her old friends.

# CHAPTER XIX

## MISS AUGUSTA'S RIVAL

THE mischief was all caused by Nelly's new dress. If she had not bought it, or, rather, if she had not committed the enormous crime of taking it to Nina Edwards to be cut and made, she would not have made an enemy of Miss Stone.

Nelly pitied Nina. She told her mother that she reminded her of Glory McWhirk, who was always looking on at other people's pleasure, and she always thought of that forlorn maiden's favorite expression, "Sech lots of good times in the world, and I ain't in 'em," whenever she passed the young dressmaker's rooms and saw her sewing by the window.

Nina belonged to the church Nelly attended, and was there every Sunday, dressed in an unfashionable coat, and a hat trimmed with faded ribbon; but Nelly never met her at any of the 280

merrymakings or social gatherings of the church, for she lived a shut-in life, plain without but beautiful within, with a beauty that would blossom in heaven with a loveliness that would astonish every eye.

Nina supported a widowed mother and an invalid sister, and that was why she was thin and pale, and her clothes were faded and old-fashioned.

To happy, warm-hearted Nelly there was something very pathetic about this girl, just her own age, who lived such a flavorless life, and she longed to do something for her. But it was hard to get acquainted with Nina. Nelly tried walking home from church with her, nodding brightly when she passed her window, and sometimes running in on her way from school, but Nina retired into a shell and closed the door against her, so that Nelly seemed to make no headway at all in her efforts towards friendship.

When she bought her new dress, Nelly carried it down to Nina to make. Miss Stone, she thought, would not blame her for trying to help the poor, pale dressmaker, who had a mother and sister to support, for that lady was comfortable and happy and had all the work she could do.

But Miss Augusta did blame her; in fact, she never quite forgave Nelly for taking work to her poor, patient rival, and was so cool and distant that Mrs. Jackson noticed it.

"I'm afraid Miss Stone does n't like it because you took your dress to Nina," said she, as they were eating their supper one night at their little round table.

"I know she does n't," Nelly replied, "but I do n't care if Miss Stone does put me out of her good graces. Oh, mamma, my heart just aches for Nina! She told me to-day that her eyes were giving out, and she would have to give up sewing or wear glasses, and she does n't see how she can afford to have her eyes fitted. Oh, I wish I could do something for her besides merely getting her to cut my dress!"

"You have done something," Mrs. Jackson replied. "You must have won her heart by your sympathy or she would not have told you her troubles."

Mrs. Jackson was right. To none of her other customers would Nina have confided the trouble that was worrying her so that she could not sleep nights; but, unconsciously, she had opened her heart and let Nelly in,

At the same time that Nelly began noticing the pale dressmaker at her work, Nina commenced watching the young teacher on her way to and from school, rather envying her her bright face and springing step, thinking bitterly that *she* had an education which enabled her to earn her living without bending over her needle all day.

When Nelly began to try and get acquainted with the dressmaker, Nina did not meet her even half way. She was shy with strangers and could not talk on the hundred-and-one nothings girls chatter about. But gradually, little by little, Nelly won her way; and when she left Miss Stone, the popular dressmaker, and brought her bundle of dress-goods down to her, Nina's heart was unlocked, and in the discussions over the new dress the two girls became fast friends.

Nina never enjoyed fitting any one as she enjoyed fitting Nelly. To be sure Nelly talked nonsense most of the time, but when the nonsense caused Nina to forget her worries and enjoy a good, hearty laugh, it was better than sense. Nelly went home with Nina one night, and was introduced to her mother and the sister, whose arm was so drawn out of shape with rheumatism that she was helpless and a burden; and after that

Nelly and her mother took to going there often, and seldom empty-handed, for books for the invalid, flowers from Mrs. Thornton's plants, and often specimens of Nelly's Saturday cooking, were left behind them.

Miss Stone took note of all these things, and communed in the bitterness of her heart on the ungratefulness of her tenants, who, after she had taken them in, turned and thus basely ministered to her rival. She might have given them warning, but Miss Stone found the cash Nelly paid her every month very convenient, and it was pleasant to have people in the other part of the house, which used to be so silent and full of echoes. And then her neighbors were very helpful. Nelly did errands for her, and Mrs. Jackson often came in and helped her with her work when she was driven, and in the evenings Miss Stone enjoyed going into their part of the house, which was so much pleasanter than her own. No, it was much easier to say spiteful things about Nelly, and gossip about her neighbors to her customers than to give them warning and thus be the loser herself.

One Saturday afternoon when a fine mist was taking off the snow and making the crossings all

ice, Nelly filled her basket with cream puffs she had made, among other good things, that morning, and, with a couple of books under her arm, started for Mrs. Edwards'. She had gotten into the habit of going there every Saturday, and the sick girl would have missed her sadly if anything had prevented her coming.

The mist was almost a rain, so with her umbrella firmly grasped in one hand, and her books and basket in the other, she started out. The good sleighing had disappeared, and though the pavements were bare the streets were very icy, and in some places almost dangerous. At the corner was one of the icy crossings which she must get over some way. It was not only slippery but a little slanting, which made it all the worse.

"If I go it will be in a lump," she thought, pausing before making the plunge, "basket, umbrella and all, and my precious puffs will be utterly spoiled. But perhaps I won't go, as I am pretty sure-footed. I'll put my trust in Providence and cross the Rubicon."

Firmly grasping her umbrella and basket she started out, but had not advanced a dozen steps before her feet began to slip. To take a step

forward was to go down altogether, to stand still would probably result in a slide down the hill, at the bottom of which was a span of horses. She tried to balance herself by means of her umbrella but that only served to hasten her destruction.

"I'm lost," she thought in despair. "If only that man will mercifully stop his horses and not run over me!"

A young man coming up the street saw her dilemma and hurried to her assistance, but before he could reach her, an urchin hopped over the ice, and, reaching out his hand, said eagerly:

"Let me take your things, Miss Jackson, then mebbe you can get along."

"Oh, Freddy Bangs!" cried Nelly in delight, "if you will take my basket in one hand, and tow me across with the other, I 'll bless you forever."

Freddy instantly seized the basket, reckless of its contents, and firmly grasping his teacher arrested her downward progress, and brought her safely to land.

"Thank you, Freddy," said Nelly, receiving back her basket. "I do n't know what would have become of me if you had not happened along. How is it boys can always stand up no matter how slippery it is?"



FREDDY BANGS AS AN ESCORT.



Freddy grinned with delight. It made him feel several inches taller to think he had been able to help Miss Jackson.

George overtook Nelly just as Freddy was skipping back to his employment of chopping ice before one of the stores.

"The result of your teaching," said he, thinking of the day he had given Freddy Bangs a shaking for snowballing his Sunday-school teacher.

"I do n't teach manners in Sunday-school," she replied. "We have regular Bible lessons now."

"Result of influence then," said George.

"May I take the basket? There was a time when Master Fred would have stood by and laughed at your dilemma, instead of going gallantly to the rescue."

"I do n't believe it," said Nelly stoutly.

"Fred is a real chivalrous little fellow."

"I knew him before you did, Nelly," replied George, "and when I first made his acquaintance nothing would have induced him to help a young lady over the ice."

"I'm glad he has improved," said Nelly, "for he is a dear boy. I think everything of him, though he is a trial in Sunday-school, he is so full of mischief. I wonder why it is that scholars who cause their teachers the most trouble are always the favorites?"

"I did n't know they were," laughed George.
"I never was a favorite with my teachers though
I was the plague of their lives. Joe and Frank
were the models in our class."

"Frank did just as much mischief as you, only he was sly and did n't get caught," said Nelly bluntly.

"But Joe was always quiet and attentive, "replied George. "Did he ever tell you how we boys used to pick upon him and make fun of him?"

"No, Joe never tells tales unless he thinks it is his duty," said Nelly with a smile.

"He is a rare good fellow," said George warmly.

It had been a hard day for the sick girl, and Nelly's coming cheered her up immensely. Nelly insisted upon her eating one of the puffs at once, to see if she had had good luck with her Saturday's baking, and between the delicious mouthfuls Nelly rehearsed her adventures.

"It is a wonder I got here alive," said she.

"You know how hilly it is at the corner of Main and Elm streets; well, I began to slide down on the ice there, looking like the distracted female out in the rain, that represents March in the almanac, my umbrella and basket held at right angles. I should have kept on sliding until I landed at the feet of a span of horses if Freddy Bangs had not appeared like an angel of mercy and steered my bark safely across."

"Was that Freddy Bangs who stopped at the gate with you?" asked the sick girl.

"No, that was Mr. George Arlington. He came along after the show was over and took charge of the puffs the rest of the way, or there is no knowing whether they would have got here safe or not."

"They are delicious," said the girl. "You are a famous cook, Nelly."

"I am rather proud of my good things," she replied. "Miss Stone comes in every Saturday night to feast on lemon pie. She pays me the honor of saying she never ate such nice ones as I make."

"These puffs are the nicest things I ever ate," said Mrs. Edwards, surveying the plateful she was putting away for tea.

"It is too bad for you to come over in the storm just to bring them," said the sick girl gratefully.

"This is nothing but a 'January thaw,' "said Nelly gaily. "I do n't mind it in the least."

"It must be so nice to be well and strong and able to go about as you do," said the other girl, looking wistfully into the bright, winsome face before her.

"I am going to wear my new dress to-morrow," said Nelly, to divert her thoughts. "It is a triumph of Nina's skill. You must be on the lookout for it at church, Mrs. Edwards. I am going to wear it down here some day, so that you can see it," she added turning to the invalid.

"I'm afraid Miss Stone won't like your going to Nina," said the widow anxiously.

"Oh, Miss Stone is not a dog in the manger," said Nelly gaily. "This is a free country, and she won't try and poison my tea because I took my dress to Nina. But I must not stay any longer as I am going way round by Chestnut Street to avoid that piece of ice, for I'm afraid Freddy won't be near to lend a hand a second time. Good-bye," and Nelly departed, leaving a bright spot to mark the sick girl's long, dull day.

## CHAPTER XX

### GEORGE CAUSES A STRIKE

WE 'LL have to fight for it, Arlington, but, mark my words, we 'll carry the day; I'm not afraid of fighting to gain my end."

Mr. Winterbourn walked excitedly up and down the library, while George stood leaning against the chimneypiece watching him. The young man had never seen his superintendent so excited before.

"I think there can be no doubt of success," said George, "the town is so strongly Democratic."

"But they have split on this confounded 'Citizens' Ticket,'" said Mr. Winterbourn, swinging round on his heels like a dancing-master as he paced the long room. "That is the trouble. We could wipe out the Republicans clean, if it was n't for their going round, buttonholing our voters, trying to get them to unite on this Citizens' Ticket."

"It looks to me," said George quietly, "as though they were not satisfied with the present administration. If our party liked the management of town affairs they would not go in for this Citizens' Ticket."

This was a bold thing for George to say, for Mr. Winterbourn had wormed himself into municipal politics until he held the reins of government in his own hands. He looked sharply at the young man leaning against the chimney-piece, but George's face told him nothing. It always vexed Mr. Winterbourn because he could not read his boarder's thoughts; but he felt sure of his being on his side, for George was as strong a Democrat as when he had illuminated his room at Mrs. Jackson's in honor of the election.

"The Republicans have got round them with a pack of lies," said Mr. Winterbourn angrily. "They know they can't do anything alone, so they have made this new ticket which they call the Citizens' Ticket just to fool them. Citizens indeed! It is nothing but Republicans hidden under that name. I'd bet ten dollars there is n't a Democratic name on it that amounts to that," and the gentleman snapped his fingers contemptuously. "They have put on men they can nose

round and flatter into thinking they are somebody. Oh, I know all about it just as well as though I had been to their secret meetings."

George said nothing as he stood thoughtfully fingering his watch-chain, and Mr. Winterbourn continued his walk up and down the room.

"We'll carry the day fast enough," he declared. "We are sure of every man that works in the mills; the Republicans can't get their votes."

"How do you know?" asked George.

"Why, have n't you told them who you are?" demanded Mr. Winterbourn. "They know you own the whole concern, and won't dare vote against you."

"I'm not up for office," said George coolly.

"No, but they know where your sympathies are, and will vote for your party, of course."

"Are you sure of that?" asked George.

"I have got to be sure of it," said the excited gentleman, wheeling around suddenly before the young man. "What do you suppose I urged you to make yourself known for if it was n't for this election! You have got to make every voter in the mills understand whom he is to throw his ballot for to-morrow. If he does n't go strong

for the Democratic party he loses his place, that 's all."

"Yes," George assented, "I think they understand that."

"Of course they understand it," said Mr. Winterbourn resuming his walk, "and the other party understand it too. They know it is no use for them to try and get hold of any of our men, especially since you have come out in your true colors. Oh, we'll carry the day without any trouble."

It was Sunday evening, the night before the Town Meeting, and the March twilight was darkening the room where the two gentlemen were. Mr. Winterbourn had been in a fever of excitement all day, for, in spite of his boast that the election would go as he wanted it to, he was uneasy and could think of nothing else. As he never talked on business matters before his sister and daughter he had carried George off into the library as soon as the evening meal was over. The room was quite dark when Sibyl appeared in the doorway.

"Why do n't you have some light?" said she turning the button of the little glass bulb over the library table. The young lady was dressed for church in her stylish spring suit, and after lighting the room she turned to her father, saying:

"Violet has a headache and is not going out. Won't you go to church with me, papa? I hate to go alone."

"Oh, I can 't sit still for an hour listening to that minister who can 't make a good argument," said Mr. Winterbourn impatiently, "but here is Arlington all ready to go."

"Oh, I would n't think of troubling Mr. Arlington," said Sibyl, with a pretty smile. "I can go alone just as well."

"I am going and will escort you," said George politely.

"Oh, thank you," said the young lady, "you are very kind."

At Mr. Winterbourn's request George had told his work people a few days before what relation he bore to them. The news had spread rapidly through the town, and the young man found himself a greater lion than ever. Old men seized him by the hand on the street, old ladies beamed upon him approvingly, and young ladies smiled their prettiest when they met him, so that the universal homage might have turned

his head if it had not been a clear and steady one.

Sibyl was conscious that she and her escort attracted a great deal of attention as they took their seats, and the fact that more than one girl envied her the attentions of the richest and most popular young man in town added greatly to the satisfaction of the moment.

While they flattered George to his face, there were many who were ready to laugh at him behind his back for investing in such a poor paying business, and called him a fool for expecting to make anything out of a manufactory that had gone to the wall.

George did not give his whole attention to the sermon that evening, for the election next day and the important step he was planning to take engrossed his thoughts. He glanced wistfully over to where Nelly and her mother sat, wishing he did not have Miss Winterbourn on his hands so that he could go home with them and talk over his plans in their little parlor. He had made up his mind what to do, but felt that it would encourage and strengthen him to tell Nelly and her mother all about it, and get their help and sympathy.

There was an undercurrent of excitement in town the next day that was felt by nearly every one. The mills were closed, and early in the morning the streets were full of men in holiday attire making their way toward the Town Hall, although the polls were not yet opened. Influential men were talking in low tones at the corners, and office seekers were confidentially seizing their allies by their buttonholes, and holding mysterious conferences.

Mr. Winterbourn was everywhere, talking to this one and that, and rushing from one place to another, evidently full of business.

About nine o'clock George was driving out of the stable-yard, when he saw Mr. Winterbourn hurrying down the street. In answer to his beckoning forefinger, George drew rein, and the anxious politician climbed to the seat beside him.

"I'm afraid we may have trouble with some of the mill-hands after all," said he in a confidential tone as George drove slowly down the street.

"In what way?" the young man asked.

"Oh, we can manage 'em if we go to work right," said Mr. Winterbourn confidently. "I whispered a word in Gorman's ear, and he has got 'em all down to the saloon."

"Yes?" said George, as his companion paused.

"They are talking pretty free now," Mr. Winterbourn continued, "about voting as they please and going against the boss if they want to; but they will soon stop that. They will vote for the one who gives them the most liquor. You have only got to tell Gorman to draw on the bar freely as he wants to, in your name, and they are ours."

"I am going down to the saloon now," said George, "and you can come with me."

"But it will hardly do for us to go in person," objected Mr. Winterbourn. "I want the votes of the temperance people. You had better give Gorman word; he'll understand."

"You need n't say anything, Mr. Winterbourn," said George. "I am going to speak to the men myself. I shall not use your name."

"But you are a member of the church," said Mr. Winterbourn cautiously; "it will not look just right, and we are so closely connected I'm afraid it will injure my vote."

"I shall make it plain that I am acting on my own responsibility," said George, "and they will understand that you have nothing to do with my orders," and with that Mr. Winterbourn was forced to be content.

There was a crowd of men in and around the saloon, most of them mill-hands. Inside the proprietor leaned smilingly over his bar, chatting with this one and that. It was going to be a good day for his trade, and he knew it.

When George drew rein before the door a breeze of excitement passed through the crowd for they had not expected the new boss to come down there and treat them in person. George marched in, holding his head up like one who is not ashamed of what he is about to do; Mr. Winterbourn following, trying to look as usual, but evidently wishing himself somewhere else.

As George entered the saloon the crowd outside followed to hear what he had to say, and the proprietor greeted him with a servile smile, saying:

"Good morning, Mr. Arlington, what can I do for you to-day?"

"You can do a great deal for me if you will, Mr. Sawyer," replied George. "I see a number of my men here and I would like to say a word to them."

Every eye was fixed upon the young man, and raising his voice slightly, George turned to them saying:

"My friends, this is election day, and you have a holiday, so that you can go to the polls and cast your vote for whom you please. You know what my politics are, but I do not know yours, nor do I care to know them. You are American citizens and have the right to vote for whom you will; and I shall not interfere with that right."

"Hurrah!" shouted one fellow, snatching off his cap. "Three cheers for the new boss and the United States of America, that lets a man do as he pleases."

"Poor policy! poor policy!" whispered Mr. Winterbourn under cover of the cheer that followed George's words. He stood like a spider hovering over a large fly that was likely to prove too much for him. "But you have only got to treat them handsomely to have them all on our side."

The men saw the superintendent whisper in George's ear, and winked slyly at one another as they waited eagerly to hear what the new boss had to say.

"I know why so many of you are gathered here," said George, looking his work people squarely and unflinchingly in the face. "In times past it has been the custom for you to be treated by those

for whose party ticket you vote; but I want to tell you, now, that not one drop of liquor will be given to you at the expense of the Company. Mr. Sawyer, I forbid your selling one drop of liquor on my account or that of the Company's to-day," and he turned to the proprietor, who, in his astonishment, forgot to receive this order with his customary smile.

Mr. Winterbourn's face grew black as a thundercloud.

"Do you know what you are doing, Arlington?" he demanded in an aside. "We'll lose the day through your confounded philanthropy and temperance notions."

"I have just one word more to say," continued George, without heeding the superintendent. "It has been my desire ever since I have been here to employ temperance men, and I have decided that henceforth no man shall work for me who tastes or touches liquor. Now, if you wish to work for me you will not drink a drop of the stuff you see before you. Do you understand?"

"Do you take us for fools?" demanded a brutal looking fellow with a head like a bullet.

"No, I take you for men," George replied firmly. "You can become brutes by spending

what you earn on drink. I give you the chance to be men indeed, to redeem your characters so that your wives can hold up their heads and not be ashamed of the name they bear. I offer you the chance of becoming respected citizens, but if you prefer this vile liquor to prosperity and respectability you cannot remain in my employ."

"Really, Mr. Arlington," interposed the proprietor, "I cannot let you stand there and injure my trade. This building is mine, and the business you are denouncing is the sole support of my family."

"I have no more to say," replied George, moving to the door, "only I wish it understood that, henceforth, any one who wants to work for me must be a temperance man."

"Shut up, Arlington," interrupted Mr. Winterbourn roughly. "Are you a natural-born fool?"

George turned on the superintendent, and Mr. Winterbourn saw that blue eyes can flash as well as black ones. For a moment the gentleman quailed, but George only said:

"It is almost time for the polls to open; shall I drive you to the hall?"

Thinking it best to put his anger into his

pocket, Mr. Winterbourn climbed into the wagon, and they drove off, leaving a group of sullen, angry men, looking after them.

"I hope you see what you have done," said Mr. Winterbourn angrily. "Every one of those men will vote against us. We shall lose the day, all owing to your notions about temperance. Let the men drink if they want to. You have no right to kick up a row and cause those fellows to vote against us. I won't stand it, nor have any such work."

"I believe, Mr. Winterbourn," said George quietly, "that the mills belong to me, and I employ the men."

"You are a fool," retorted Mr. Winterbourn, who had worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement that he hardly knew what he was saying, "and have acted as though you were half-witted. You'll regret what you have done some day, for the men won't stand such nonsense, and if you carry out your threat the mills will be shut down."

"That is my own lookout," said George coolly.

"Well, I wash my hands of you," said the angry superintendent. "You have made me ruin my chance of reelection; and if you attempt to

carry out your threat you can look somewhere else for a superintendent."

"Very well," said George, drawing rein at the hall door, round which a crowd of men were congregated, "I will do so at once."

Mr. Winterbourn was a little startled by George's prompt reply, for he knew the young man well enough to feel sure when he said a thing he meant it, and his hasty words might cost him dear; but he was too angry to take them back. He would run the risk, for there was too much at stake, just now, to settle any personal disputes; if he carried the election he would risk the rest.

The first thing to do was to secure the votes of the mill-hands. They were just angry enough to rally round the superintendent if he offered them what the new boss had refused, and if the fellow was foolish enough to carry out his threat why the mills would be shut down, and then Mr. Winterbourn had no doubt but that he could get round the new owner, and things would go on as usual.

The workmen did rally round the superintendent, but in spite of their support Mr. Winterbourn lost the election. George's horse and

wagon was busy all day carrying old and infirm Democratic voters to and from the polls. The young man supported his superintendent in every way he could, but it was no use; Mr. Winterbourn's honors were stripped from him, and he went home at night a bitterly disappointed and angry man.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### A RANSOM FOR MANY

MY dear boy, you don't know how proud I am of you!"

It was the following Saturday evening, and the first opportunity George had had to go and talk over his plans with his old friends. Nelly had met him at the door, but did not say much; she could not tell him, as her mother did, how proud she had been of him all the week. Mrs. Jackson had met him in the little parlor and given him both her hands, while Nelly stood looking on with shining eyes.

"I'm glad to hear you say so, Mother Jackson," George replied, "for I have heard nothing but abuse for the last week, and praise does a man good, once in a while."

"You knew we would approve of what you have done," said Mrs. Jackson, motioning her guest to a seat. "But this could not have been 306

a sudden plan; you must have been preparing for it all winter."

"Yes, I have been," he replied, "and thought that Town Meeting day would be a good time for me to take a stand on the principles I mean to adopt for the future. I knew pretty well what the results would be, so, Tuesday morning, when the men refused to work, I telegraphed to Waterhouse, and he came with all the men I wanted."

"And the mills have not been closed a day?" said Nelly with sparkling eyes.

"No," replied George, "I didn't mean they should be, for I didn't want the innocent to suffer for the guilty."

"Did you discharge Mr. Winterbourn?" asked Mrs. Jackson.

"No, Mr. Winterbourn resigned," said George, with a little twinkle in his eye. "He told me Monday that if I was fool enough to try and carry out such a plan he would have nothing more to do with me, so Tuesday morning I had only to take him at his word."

"You have been very cautious in what you have said about Mr. Winterbourn, George," said Mrs. Jackson, "but you can speak freely here.

Is it true that he furnished liquor to your men on Monday?"

"Yes, he did," said George, looking stern as he thought of his ex-superintendent. "He fed the flame and did the mischief, and it is only right that he should suffer for it. He thought that I could not get along without him, and was taken completely by surprise when Waterhouse came, and I put him in his place."

"What kind of a man is Waterhouse?" asked Nelly.

"He is a fine fellow," replied George, warmly, "and just the man for the place. I made his acquaintance in New York after grandfather's death, and consulted him when I invested in this business. We have been corresponding all winter, and he has held himself in readiness for just such a crisis as this."

"What a mine you have sprung, George," said Mrs. Jackson. "But what is going to become of the men who are adrift without work?"

"That is the worst of it," said George looking very sober. "Winterbourn and those sneaking, contemptible saloon-keepers give them liquor enough to keep the flame going. I only ask them to choose between rum and work. If they

would come to me sober, and ask for employment I would give them a trial; but Winterbourn and the saloon-keepers take care that they shall not be sober, and their families are suffering."

"And they are dangerous too," said Mrs. Jackson, looking anxiously at the young man before her. "Satan always finds plenty of mischief for such idle hands."

"I know it," said George despondently; then, rousing himself, he added with his usual energy: "But Rome was not built in a day; I'll root out these weeds if it takes me a lifetime. I mean the day shall come when my workmen shall be honest, upright, law-abiding citizens, and their families comfortable and respectable."

"The day will come, George," said Mrs. Jackson cheerfully. "God always blesses our work when we are in earnest, and persevere in spite of all obstacles. Only, my dear boy," looking at him anxiously, "be very careful."

"Yes, ma'am, I shall be," he replied soberly.
"I sha'n't run any risks."

"How does Violet like her new boardingplace?" asked Nelly, to break a little pause.

George's face lighted up as he turned toward the girl seated in a low chair before the fire. "She was glad to leave the Winterbourns'," he replied, "for it has n't been very pleasant there for either of us lately, and this boarding-house is a very homelike place. You must go and see her oftener now, Nelly."

"Yes, I will," Nelly promised.

"She is going to New York to join mother soon," George continued, "but wants to see me through here first, she says."

They talked on for some little time about the changes George intended making, and his plans for the future, but when the clock struck ten he rose and bade them good night. As he opened the outside door he said suddenly:

"Come here, Nelly, and see the northern lights."

The northern sky was all aglow with quivering light; but after he called Nelly to the door, George, instead of watching it, stood looking down into the sweet upturned face of the girl by his side.

"Somehow I hate to say good night, Nelly," said he, "but I must go, for it is getting late."

"You are going right home, are n't you, George?" said Nelly earnestly. "You won't go near the mills or down onto Water Street again to-night, will you?"

"Why do you ask?" he replied.

"Because," said she, quickly, "you know that they hate you, and might try to do mischief."

"I know it, and am prepared for them," and George took something out of his pocket that flashed even in the starlight.

"O George!" exclaimed Nelly recoiling. "Is it loaded?"

"Yes," he laughed, slipping it back into his pocket, "but there is no danger of my shooting myself, nor giving any one else a chance to shoot me, so do n't let any horrible visions disturb your slumbers."

"You are going right home?" said Nelly anxiously.

"I am going home now," he replied.

"And will stay there?" said she hurriedly. "O George, do promise that you will not go near the mills after dark. I have thought, all the week, how dreadful it would be if something should happen."

"Have you worried about me, Nelly?" said George eagerly. "Would you care if something should happen?"

"You know you are just like a brother to me," said Nelly, hastily, "and I should feel so bad for

Violet's sake if anything should happen; she is here all alone, you know."

"So for Violet's sake you worry about me," said he.

"Yes, you ought to think of her and be careful," said she earnestly. "Won't you promise not to go near the mills, after dark?"

"I can't," said he gravely," for I'm afraid of fire, and have the mills watched every night, and, as we are short of men, I have to take my turn."

"Are you going to watch to-night?" she asked turning pale.

"Yes, but do not worry even on Violet's account," said he gaily. "I watched Wednesday night and it was as quiet as could be; I did not hear a sound nor see even a shadow. There is not a particle of danger, Nelly, so do n't imagine any horrible thing happening. Desperate as they are, they won't do anything worse than set fire to the mills, and won't do that as long as they know they are watched. Now I must say good night, but remember—pleasant dreams."

Nelly returned his good night, and stood watching him go down the path. Reaching the gate he did not stop to open it, but placing his hand on the top swung himself lightly over.

Seeing Nelly still standing in the door, he turned and gaily took off his cap, as he went rapidly down the street. How gay and handsome he looked! If anything should happen how dreadful it would be! Nelly would not harbor the thought, but resolutely closing the door went back to their pleasant parlor.

Sunday morning dawned bright and beautiful with a feeling of spring in the air. It was Easter Sunday, and, as she dressed for church, Nelly felt a thrill of new life as she thought of the resurrection of nature after the long frozen winter.

Nelly and her mother were a little late, and the magnificent voluntary was pealing from the organ as they took their seat. The church was beautifully decorated with flowers in honor of the glorious Easter Day, and in front of the altar stood a snow-white cross, with the words, "Christ Is Risen," above it.

Nelly noticed that neither George nor Violet were at church, but had forgotten her fears of the night before. This beautiful Easter morning it did not seem as though anything but peace and love could dwell upon the earth; nothing terrible could happen in such a beautiful world.

She enjoyed the service more than usual;

the music, prayers, and sermon, all so full of joy because Christ had risen, and when she went into the vestry to join her class her face was very bright and happy. She had become very much attached to her class. They had not become model boys by any means; there were Sundays when she was almost tempted to give them up. She had one encouragement, and that was that they liked her, and declared they would not go to Sunday-school for any one else, so she persevered Sunday after Sunday, trying to do her best.

The boys came in, as usual, this morning, not one by one, but in a body.

- "Good morning, boys," said Nelly cordially.
- "Good morning, Miss Jackson. Have you heard the news?"
  - "No, what is it?" she replied.
- "Mr. Arlington was shot last night down by the mills."

The room was not going round, but it seemed so. The news caused her heart to stand still, and made her feel as though everything was giving way beneath her.

- "Is he dead?" she asked, surprising herself by her calmness.
  - "No, ma'am, but the doctor says he can 't live,"

said Freddy Bangs in what seemed a terribly cheerful voice, but Freddy did not feel cheerful a bit. He did not hold a grudge against the young man who had given him a shaking. On the contrary he liked and admired George exceedingly, and his freckled face was very sober, but, boylike, he tried not to show his feelings.

"Who did it?" asked Nelly, feeling as though she were suffocating.

"Jim Gorman," replied Freddy. "And I hope they 'll hang him."

Nelly shuddered. She could see it all; how the murderer had crept up behind the young man who had bidden her good night the evening before, looking so gay and handsome, and had fired the cruel shot. Was it a presentiment of what was coming that had caused her to warn him? If he had only heeded her and had not been so confident! The boys were inclined to talk about it, but she stopped them, for she could not bear to hear what they were saying about the terrible event.

The hour for the lesson was the longest and hardest Nelly had ever spent. She could not think of a thing to say to the boys, who laughed and whispered as much as they wanted to. How

could they laugh? How could any one laugh, she wondered, when such a terrible thing had happened?

At last the superintendent's bell rang. She had only to endure the mockery of the joyful Easter hymn, and then she could go home. She was hurriedly gathering up her books when Mr. Perkins came down the aisle and paused to speak to her.

"Good morning, Miss Jackson," said he. "Is n't this a beautiful Easter day?"

Nelly only briefly assented.

"It is a terrible thing that has happened to Mr. Arlington, is n't it?" said the gentleman, walking down the aisle beside her.

Again poor Nelly made an assent.

"The fellow was intoxicated," Mr. Perkins continued, "and has been ever since town meeting, and to my mind is not half so much to blame as those that furnished him the liquor. But it is hard on Arlington," and the gentleman looked very sober.

They were at the door at last. Nelly could make her escape, with a bow, and hurry home. Was it a bright, beautiful day? The sun seemed to mock her with its bright rays. The news

she had heard had turned the world black to her.

Miss Stone met her in the parlor. She had lighted the oil-stove and was preparing to make the usual three cups of chocolate which she always shared with her neighbors on Sunday noon.

"Where is mamma?" asked Nelly. She felt that she could not entertain the dressmaker that day.

"She told me to tell you," said Miss Stone, looking sharply at the pale girl, "that that Arlington—"

"Oh, yes, I know," interrupted Nelly, "but where is mamma?"

"That is what I was going to tell you," said Miss Augusta. "She has gone to him. His sister sent for her. You had n't more than got to church when word came."

Her mother could go, that was one comfort. Nelly took off her wraps, wondering if Miss Augusta would stay all day.

"The doctor says there is only one chance in a hundred for him," continued the dressmaker. "If the fellow hadn't been drinking he would have killed him outright. He hid and fired at him from behind."

"Yes, but please do n't talk about it any more," pleaded Nelly. "Is the chocolate ready?"

"It will be in about a minute," said Miss Stone, inspecting the dish on the oil-stove. "I thought I'd have it ready by the time you got here. What have you got for a Sunday-school book? Anything I want to read?"

Miss Stone stayed to lunch. She did not invest in such luxuries as chocolate and had no idea of losing her favorite cup at her neighbors' expense. Nelly tried to entertain her, but she could not talk, and part of the time was unconscious of what the dressmaker was saying. At last Miss Stone kindly betook herself to her own side of the house to read Nelly's Sundayschool book.

Left to herself at last Nelly could not find relief in tears as she had hoped. She could not cry, for her eyes were hot and dry, and nothing relieved the burden on her heart. To read was impossible, and even when she looked out of the window she could only think of George as he had leaped the gate the night before, so strong and full of life, and now he was stricken down by a murderer's hand. She longed for her mother, but dusk fell and Mrs. Jackson did not re-

turn. At eight o'clock a messenger came with a note.

# DEAR NELLY:

George is very low, but Dr. Thornton has not given up all hope. I shall stay with Violet until her father and mother get here. She is a brave girl and is bearing up splendidly. Send me my wrapper and slippers. In haste,

MOTHER.

Nelly read the note over and over again, deriving some comfort from the words, "Dr. Thornton has not given up all hope." That helped her through the night. It was hard to wait in suspense, but she could pray and trust, with fresh hope, that God would not take one out of the world who was leading such a noble life, and doing so much for His cause and kingdom.

# CHAPTER XXII

#### AN ANXIOUS DAY

IT was a relief to Nelly to go to school on Monday morning, for she could escape from her thoughts in teaching, and learned for the first time how work often proves to be a blessing.

Joe met her at the door, looking very grave and sober.

"Have you heard from George, this morning?" was the first thing she said. She had hoped her mother would send some message, but no word had come, and the only consolation she had was the thought that if what she had dreaded had come to pass she would have heard of it.

"I called there as I came along," Joe replied.

"There has been no change. Dr. Thornton has called a consultation of doctors this afternoon."

"They never do that unless they have hope, do they?" asked Nelly anxiously.

"They have a hope," said Joe cheerfully.

"Dr. Thornton has not given him up by any
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means. I'm so glad your mother can be there, Nelly, for Violet's sake."

"When will Mr. and Mrs. Arlington get here?"

"They expect Mrs. Arlington this morning. She was in New York; but Mr. Arlington will not get here before night, for he was down home."

"And Gorman?" she asked with a shudder.

"He has disappeared. If he is arrested he must stand trial for the assault. The fact that he was drunk is no excuse in the eyes of the law."

"Indeed, he ought to be punished, and so ought those who kept him under the influence," said Nelly in a hard tone of voice as she thought of what George had said Saturday evening.

"The most wretched man in this town just now, Nelly, is Mr. Winterbourn," said Joe gravely.

"He deserves to be wretched," said Nelly as she turned away to hang up her hat and jacket.

The hours dragged slowly by. Nelly almost dreaded to leave the schoolroom for fear the news would meet her that George was dead, and was grateful to Miss Stone for asking her in there to dinner, for the dressmaker's society was preferable to her own thoughts, and she had dreaded her solitary meal.

Nelly and Joe were walking home from school together at night when they met Frank. The consultation was over and both stopped by common consent, while Joe asked the question that was on every one's lips:

"What do you think of George? How is he now?"

"Oh, he'll pull through all tight," replied Frank carelessly. "He is n't half so badly off as Thornton makes out. You know he always represents his cases as bad as possible, so that if they get well every one will think he has effected a great cure, and if they die no one will be surprised."

"Then you think there is hope for George," said Joe gravely.

"Oh, yes, I have n't a doubt but he will get well, and Thornton will have him to brag about as long as he lives. As soon as I examined the case I saw it was n't as bad as was represented. He 'll be all right in a month or two," and, nodding in the careless, patronizing manner he always affected towards Joe, the young doctor passed on.

Nelly felt as though wings were attached to her feet, and Frank never stood so high in her regard before. She could forgive him all his past sins, since he had told her so confidently that George was going to get well.

"O Joe," she exclaimed, "is n't it splendid?"
Joe looked down into her shining eyes and kept back the words he was ready to speak. His hopes had not risen a particle, for he had too high an opinion of Dr. Thornton to believe what Frank had said, and knew that the young doctor's words were prompted by jealousy, but he would not tell Nelly what he thought. She, at least, might have the comfort of believing them; so with steps that almost danced Nelly went into the house to find her mother, with her bonnet still on, doing up a large bundle by the table.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "I am so glad you are here! It seems like an age since I saw you last," and throwing both arms around her mother's neck Nelly bowed her face to hide the tears of joy shining in her eyes.

Mrs. Jackson was surprised at her daughter's manner, for she had thought of her often and anxiously during their separation.

"How have you got along, dear, while I have been gone?" she asked, when Nelly raised her head, her cheeks, deeply flushed, and her hat all on one side.

"Oh, it has been dreadful," Nelly replied, "but it is over now. Is n't it splendid that the verdict is so hopeful, and they think he will get well?"

"The verdict hopeful!" exclaimed Mrs. Jackson. "Why, my dear girl, they held out no hope except that his splendid constitution and the temperate life he has led may save him."

Nelly sank into a chair and the color in her cheeks faded, leaving her very pale.

"O mamma," she cried, "Frank just told me he would get well. He was at the consultation and said that Dr. Thornton thought it worse than it really was."

"An old and skilled physician like Dr. Thornton would not make such a mistake," said Mrs. Jackson gravely. "I am afraid, dear, that Frank's word is not good for much, and that he is jealous of the other doctors."

Driven back into despair after her few minutes of elation, Nelly, for the first time since she had heard the news, burst into tears. Her mother wisely let her weep, for her own eyes were full as she looked at her daughter's bent head, and went on quietly about her preparations. When the last thing was done she laid her hand on Nelly's shoulder, saying gently:

"He is in God's hands, Nelly, and we can trust Him to do what is best."

Nelly's sobs ceased, and in a few minutes she raised her head, and, trying to speak naturally, asked: "How does he seem?"

"He is unconscious, and does not know anything that goes on around him. He is very low, but there is still hope."

"Has Mrs. Arlington come?" asked Nelly.

"Yes, she came this morning, and his father is expected to-night. I am going to stay with them, however, for Mrs. Arlington can do nothing in the sick-room and Violet is utterly worn out. I shall help the nurse as long as she needs me."

"And I shall have to stay alone again to-night," said Nelly sadly.

"You do not begrudge me to George, do you, dear?" said Mrs. Jackson cheerfully.

"No," she replied, "I am glad you can go. I wish there was something I could do," she added desperately.

"There is," replied Mrs. Jackson, thinking of something that might do her daughter good, "you can help me carry these things down. I think Mrs. Arlington and Violet would both like to see you."

Nelly rose and straightened her hat before the glass, looking carefully to see if there were any traces of tears on her face; then, taking the basket her mother handed her, followed her out the door. Her heart, which had been so light when she heard Frank's verdict, was heavy again now, and the burden which had been raised for a moment seemed resting with a greater weight than before.

Mrs. Jackson talked cheerfully all the way, telling her daughter how brave Violet had been through all the trouble, and how nobly she had acted; but nothing could cheer or comfort Nelly since the false hopes Frank had raised had received such a blow.

Four rooms in the boarding-house, where George had gone when his trouble with Mr. Winterbourn had made it impossible for him and his sister to stay there any longer, had been given up to them, and in the large front chamber the wounded man lay. The other boarders had willingly vacated the front part of the house, so that he could be kept perfectly quiet.

Mrs. Arlington had seen Mrs. Jackson and her daughter approach the house, and as they came up-stairs she softly opened the door of her room

and beckoned for them to come in. She could not be trusted in the sick-room, for she could not control her grief at the sight of her son lying there wounded and helpless, and the doctor had ordered perfect quiet. She was the same beautiful woman Nelly had loved and admired eight years ago, but she was very pale, and the dark circles under her eyes showed how she had wept for her only son. She drew Nelly into her arms and kissed her warmly.

"My dear little Nelly," said she, with all her old charm of manner, "you have not changed at all. You look just as you did eight years ago. To think we should meet under such circumstances! We little thought when we parted that it would be so long before we should meet again, and then that George—"

Mrs. Arlington paused, for tears choked her voice. Nelly felt that it was impossible for her to talk about George, and still she must say something.

- "How is Violet?" she faltered.
- "My poor, dear girl is asleep," replied Mrs. Arlington, "but you must wait until she wakes, for it will do her good to see you."

Mrs. Jackson was moving about like one who

is at home. Crossing the hall she softly turned the knob of a door, and Nelly knew she was going in where George was lying.

"I'm so glad you and your mother were here, for Violet's sake," said Mrs. Arlington. "It was such a shock! I'm afraid she will never get over it. You know they wakened her out of a sound sleep with the news that her brother was killed."

Nelly shuddered. She had not realized before how hard it had been for Violet, although she had told George she should worry about him on his sister's account.

"It was harder for her than for me," Mrs. Arlington continued, "though when I went and saw him, looking as though he were dead, I nearly fainted, and Dr. Thornton took hold of me and led me right out of the room. He will not allow me to go near him because I cannot control my feelings. He cannot realize what it is for me to see my son, usually so full of life, and who never meets me after an absence of only a week without seizing me in his arms and kissing me, lying there utterly unconscious, neither looking at nor speaking to me."

Mrs. Arlington's eyes filled with tears, but

Nelly could not think of anything to say, nor trust her voice, if words had come to her, for something seemed closing around her throat and choking her. The lady raised her handkerchief to her eyes, and then went on:

"The last time I saw him was in New York. He spent the evening with me at Mrs. Ashton's —you remember her, Nelly—and was so bright and gay and full of life. He bade me good-bye over night because he was going away before I was up in the morning. I can remember just how he looked when he kissed me and said: 'Wish your darling boy good luck, mother.' O Nelly, you cannot imagine how I feel when I think of him lying there helpless and unconscious!"

"I can," said Nelly, feeling as though she was being smothered, "for he was at our house the Saturday evening before it happened."

"Was he?" said Mrs. Arlington eagerly. "Oh, if he had not gone down to those mills to watch!"

"He was doing his duty," said Nelly. "It was splendid of him, I think."

"He had much better let them set them on fire if they wanted to," said Mrs. Arlington. "He could afford to lose them better than his life." "It was not the property he thought of," said Nelly. "It was the principle he was working for."

"I did not approve of his coming here in the first place," said Mrs. Arlington, "and said all I could against it. It was absurd for a young man like him, with a fortune of his own, to invest in a worn-out business like this, and then come and superintend it in person. But George is just like his father, who upheld him in what he did. Only Saturday I received a letter from Mr. Arlington, full of praises of George, saying he was perfectly delighted with him. Now I know he wishes they had both listened to me and that George had not come to this dreadful place. Dear me, I dread meeting Henry, this will be such a terrible blow to him."

As she listened Nelly felt a glow of pride which in a measure comforted her. George had been struck down in the midst of a glorious fight, and no soldier had more cause to be proud of his wounds than had he. Even if George died she would never regret that he had come there, for he had proved his manhood, and given his life for a grand cause. How could his mother help feeling this? she wondered. The warm admiration she

had once felt for Mrs. Arlington had cooled. She was a lovely and beautiful lady still, but the young woman saw what the girl of seventeen had not, the selfishness and weakness of the character she had thought so perfect.

"I hear Violet," said Mrs. Arlington suddenly.
"I will tell her you are here, for it will do her good to see you."

Violet came in, looking but the ghost of the beautiful, blooming girl Nelly had seen last. Her heavy black hair was confined in a loose knot, and made her pale cheeks look all the whiter by contrast. Heavy shadows were under her dark eyes, and her lips had a pathetic droop.

The two girls did not speak, but as Violet entered the room Nelly rose, and going up to her, silently put both arms around her neck and kissed her.

"Have you been here very long, Nelly?" Violet asked. "How long have I been asleep, mamma?"

"Nearly two hours," replied Mrs. Arlington.
"I hope it will do you good. You have not slept since George was brought home."

But Violet did not want to talk about what had evidently been such a shock to her, and,

drawing Nelly to the window, she said, looking at her closely:

"How pale you are, Nelly! Have you been teaching all day!"

"Of course," replied Nelly cheerfully. "It is the spring weather that makes me look pale. Do n't you remember how Mrs. Gibbs used to steep thoroughwort and make us take it for a spring tonic?"

Violet smiled, a smile that was sadder than tears.

"You had to get your own dinner this noon," said she. "You must have been very lonesome."

"Oh, Miss Stone took pity on me," said Nelly. "She had a nice hot dinner all ready and invited me in to help eat it. Do n't think I begrudge you mamma, Violet. I am glad she could come."

"I do n't know what I should have done without her," said Violet, with a quickly-drawn breath.

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Arlington, drawing near, and laying a soft, white hand on Nelly's arm. "Your mother has been a great comfort to us. I don't know how I shall ever repay her."

- "Has she come back, mamma?" asked Violet.
  - "Yes, and will watch with the nurse to-night;

and you must rest. We must take care of you, or, as Dr. Farnsworth said this afternoon, you will be sick."

Violet turned away with a slight curl of her lip which did not argue well for the young doctor's solicitation in her behalf; and Nelly, seeing she could not make herself useful there as her mother was doing, did not stay, but bidding mother and daughter good-bye went home to her lonely tea and the company of her own anxious thoughts.

# CHAPTER XXIII

# NELLY'S DISCOVERY

As the weeks went by George continued to hold his own, so that the faint hope entertained for him grew stronger, and, at last, as consciousness returned, and little by little he began to gain strength, the doctor gave out word that he was out of danger, if nothing new set in, and then burdened hearts began to sing for joy. But it was a long, hard struggle to coax him back to life, and the days were long, warm and sunny before the once vigorous young man could be helped to an easy chair and could sit by the window for a few minutes.

Dr. Thornton said that he did not deserve any credit for the cure, for it was all owing to the young man's fine constitution and the splendid nursing he had received. Not only had the professional nurse done her best, but Mrs. Jackson had been constantly on hand to relieve and assist,

and Violet had shown a talent which delighted the doctor. The girl had been faithfulness itself, and they could hardly persuade her to leave her brother long enough to take the necessary exercise.

Spring had merged into summer before George was able to walk about his room, and many changes had taken place in Dedham. The mills, under the management of Waterhouse, the new superintendent, were doing a better business than they had done for years, and the hands were steady, sober and industrious men; for when they found they could not get work, and indulge in the habit of taking liquor freely, many were sensible enough to try and leave it off, and found plenty to help them try to keep their new resolves. Those who would not give up the liquor had disappeared from the mills, and others had taken their places.

Mr. Winterbourn moved away, for, after the attempted murder of George, the place became uncomfortable for him. He had lost the high position he had held in town government, and after his defeat several things came to light in regard to the management of affairs that were not exactly to his credit. It was known that he had

not only given liquor to the workmen on town meeting day, but had tried to stir up rebellion among them, and furnished Gorman with the liquor which so crazed his brain that he fired the fateful shot. So the ex-superintendent moved his family out of town, and Dedham knew him no more.

Gorman was never heard from, and all pursuit of him was stopped as soon as George began to recover; for almost the first words the young man spoke were: "Do n't let them get hold of Gorman. It was n't so much his fault." He became so excited and feverish about it that Mr. Arlington promised to withdraw all pursuit of the young man.

It was almost the end of the term before Nelly saw George, but one beautiful day, late in the afternoon, they met.

- "He has coaxed so hard we have consented to let him see you," said Violet, "but you must not excite him. You know Dr. Thornton does n't approve of his having visitors yet."
- "I won't go in if you think I had better not," said Nelly, wondering why she felt so nervous at the thought of meeting George.
  - "Oh, you must, now," said Violet, "for we

promised him he should see you to-day after school, and if we should disappoint him it might cause some of those dreadful things to happen to his brain that Dr. Thornton used to scare us about."

"I can tell how fast George is improving by the number of your ridiculous speeches," said Nelly smiling.

"I shall talk nothing but pure nonsense, then, when he is his old self again," she replied. "But mind you do n't excite him now. If I think you are staying too long, I shall sneeze outside the door to remind you that your time is up."

"Why, are n't you coming in with me?" asked Nelly in surprise.

"No, he is only able to receive one visitor at a time," and, with this statement, Violet pushed Nelly through the door and closed it behind her.

George was sitting in an easy chair, a bright afghan thrown over his knees, his head against a large pillow, looking so weak and pale, so unlike the strong, handsome fellow who had bidden her good night on that memorable Saturday evening, that Nelly paused just inside the door, looking at him in dismay.

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She had been told that he looked so much better, and had gained so much, that unconsciously she had made up her mind to see him just as she had often pictured him to herself, and was unprepared for the change sickness had made. Why, he looked but the wreck of his former self! and Nelly could not speak for the emotions which rose and choked her.

George had heard the door open and shut, and, seeing who entered, a faint flush rose in his pale cheeks, and he tried to rise, but Nelly stopped him, saying, as she crossed the room: "O George, you must not get up; you are so weak. Oh, I did not realize how sick you have been!" and the tears would come to her eyes, though she tried to keep them back, remembering she must not agitate him.

"Why, Nelly, I am almost well," said George, looking up in surprise as she stood beside him. "I'm so glad to see you! I have longed for you so. Sit down where I can look at you," and Nelly found herself in a low chair by his side, while they looked at each other with hungry eyes, both conscious that one had been near the brink of the grave since their last meeting.

"I have longed to see you ever since I began

to get well, but they were afraid you would excite me, as if your presence was n't just what I needed! The pistol I showed you did n't do any good, did it? Do you remember that Saturday night? How many years ago was it?"

"I had a presentiment that evening, George," said Nelly. "If only you had not gone to the mills! Some one else could have watched."

"I'm glad I went, Nelly," said he, with something of his old energy. "I am willing to bear it, for the shot Gorman fired did more good for the cause than anything else. None of them hated me enough to want to kill me. It was liquor that did it; and I'm willing to bear it all for the sake of the good it has done."

"But suppose it had killed you?" faltered Nelly.

"I'm willing to give my life for the sake of saving men from the demon of alcohol," he replied. "My life is not of so much consequence as their souls."

"O George!" was all she could say, for tears choked her voice.

"Would you have cared very much?" he asked earnestly.

"Oh, it would have been terrible," she replied,

forgetting she must keep calm and not excite him. "It would have been too great a sacrifice. Think of your father and mother and Violet!"

"I don't want to die," he replied. "Life never looked brighter or more worth living than it did that Saturday night when I bade you goodbye, and, if I had been asked to have made the sacrifice then, I don't know as I would have been strong enough to have given my life and all I was looking forward to for the sake of the cause, much as I loved it."

"But nothing would have kept you from your duty," said Nelly eagerly. "If you had known Gorman was lying in wait for you, you would have gone down to the mills and stood out your watch just the same."

"Do you have so high an opinion of me as that?" said George eagerly. "Whether it is the right one or not it makes me happy to know you think well of me."

Nelly blushed, and was almost glad to hear a warning cough outside the door.

"Time is up," said Violet, putting her head in at the door, like a turnkey warning a prisoner that his visitors must depart.

Nelly sprang up hastily, but George held out

his hand and clasped hers eagerly. How weak the once strong fingers had become!

"You must come again," said he. "I will get well fast if they will let me see you every day. Promise you will come to-morrow."

"Perhaps," she murmured, and drawing her hand from his weak fingers, she slipped out of the room.

"You old darling!" cried Violet, giving Nelly a smothering embrace as she met her in the hall. "What a splendid girl you are!"

"Why, I have n't done anything!" said Nelly in surprise.

"You will make George the happiest fellow on earth; won't you?"

Nelly was glad that Violet's arms were round her neck so that she could not see her face, as she replied in a smothered tone:

"He has n't asked me yet."

"No, poor fellow!" said Violet warmly. "He wants to do it properly, and he is so weak he can't stand yet. But, Nelly, he loves you. I have known it ever since I came here. Mamma and I have n't satisfied him at all since he began to get well; he has begged and entreated us to

let him see you and been real cross because we had to refuse. O, Nelly, you will be good to him; won't you?"

"I can 't accept an offer by proxy," said Nelly demurely.

"I am not going to make one," Violet declared.
"George can make his own offers. I'm not going to say another word on the subject," and she finished by giving Nelly a kiss.

The whole family seemed to understand how matters stood between George and Nelly quite as well as did Violet, for Mrs. Arlington kissed the girl warmly when they met, and, though she said not a word, there were tears in her dark eyes. Mr. Arlington treated her as though she was his daughter as well as Violet, and even Dr. Thornton demanded to know what she had done to his patient to cause him to improve so rapidly.

The warm weather in June was very trying to those who had stood over George all through his long illness, though no one realized what a strain it had been until his faithful, devoted sister frightened them all one hot, bright morning by fainting dead away.

It was the last day of school. Examinations were over, and the year was to close with the

graduation exercises in the evening. Late in the afternoon when Nelly ran up-stairs to the Arlingtons' apartments she was met with a great surprise.

"I am so glad you have come. Violet gave us a dreadful fright this morning by fainting away."

"Violet fainted away!" repeated Nelly. "Is she sick?"

"She is utterly worn out, and the doctor fears nervous prostration, so we are going to send her home, for she will not rest while she is here."

"She ought to rest," said Nelly. "I have noticed for some time how pale she has been."

"I am afraid our anxiety about George has made us selfish and careless," said Mrs. Arlington, "but we are going to send her off to-morrow, and are going to ask a great favor of you. It will be so lonely for her at home we want you to go with her."

"To-morrow?" said Nelly in surprise.

"Yes, George proposed it. Your school closes to-day and you will only have to pack your trunk. We are all so anxious to have you go with Violet. I don't know as we can get her started without you."

"But what about mamma?" said Nelly, hardly able to grasp the situation.

"She will wait for us," Mrs. Arlington replied.
"You were both going with us when George is able to travel; but that will not be till some time next month, the doctor says. The time will pass quickly, and I shall feel perfectly safe about Violet if you are with her."

"I must talk it over with mamma," said Nelly, still feeling bewildered by the sudden plan.

"Of course you must, dear child," replied Mrs. Arlington. "But come and see George; he is impatiently waiting for you."

Nelly had been helping the graduates with their decorations, and in her white dress and sailor hat, flushed with heat and exercise, she looked unusually pretty when she went in where George was waiting, in his usual place, to receive her.

"You will go with Violet, won't you?" he asked eagerly, when greetings were exchanged. "I want you there to meet me when I get home. Are you willing to go on ahead and wait for me, Nelly?"

"Yes," she replied, "I will go if mamma is willing."

Mrs. Jackson gave her consent and began to help her daughter to get ready at once. It was a hurried leave-taking, and mother and daughter had no opportunity to speak of anything but the necessary arrangements, for Miss Stone was running in and out, helping about the hundred-and-one things a person finds to do before starting on a journey.

Mrs. Jackson felt that this separation meant a good deal, and that Nelly would never be quite the same again. Already another held the first place in her heart, and she would soon assume new cares and responsibilities and would never be a light-hearted girl again.

The thought made Mrs. Jackson feel both sad and happy. It was hard to give up her daughter who had been her sole treasure all her life, but she loved George like a son, and if she had to resign Nelly she was glad it was to him. Still, when Nelly was gone, and she began to pick up and put away the things she had left behind, Mrs. Jackson could not help feeling as though there had been a funeral, and something she had loved and cared for had been carried away, never to return.

Mr. Arlington carried the girls to the station,

and, buying their tickets and checking their baggage, saw them safely started on their journey. They were just hurrying on board the train when a young man with a grip in his hand came out of the ticket-office and hastened to join them.

"Holloa, Mr. Allen!" Mr. Arlington exclaimed.

"Going east?"

"Yes, sir," Joe replied. "I'm going to Exeter."

"Then I'll put these young ladies in your care," replied Mr. Arlington. "They are bound to my place; you know where that is."

In the hurry and confusion of the graduation Nelly had not told Joe she was going east, for she felt rather shy about saying anything about it, but she was glad to have his company, for it was pleasant to have an escort. After Mr. Arlington bade them good-bye, Joe secured a seat with them, and settled them comfortably for the journey.

Nelly discovered something during that journey which had never occurred to her before, and that was, that Joe and Violet seemed very much pleased with each other's society. She had been the object of Joe's care and attention ever since they had been teaching together; he had done her errands, transacted her business, but every wish

of her heart had not been anticipated and provided as were Violet's. If it was a drink of water, the raising of a window, a newspaper or novel, Joe was on hand, almost before Violet could make known her request. When she innocently remarked that bananas were her favorite fruit, a dozen appeared at once as if by magic.

When Boston was reached the girls were very glad to have Joe to get them and their baggage across the city to the Portland steamer which they had decided to take as easier for Violet than a night on the cars.

They were up bright and early the next morning to catch a glimpse of Portland's beautiful harbor, and found Joe pacing the deck enjoying the invigorating salt air, as the steamer plowed her way through the tumbling waters of the bay. They were all sorry to leave the steamer for another day on the cars, though Violet stood the journey much better than they had feared, and seemed more like her old, gay self than she had since George's sad accident.

They reached Exeter at three o'clock and Joe reluctantly bade them good-bye. The girls looked eagerly at the old familiar depot, wishing they might stop over, but that was impossible. The

cars bore them on to their destination, which was soon reached, and they found Jerry, looking just as he had eight years before, waiting for them with the carriage.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## GEORGE GETS HIS REWARD

THE two girls had the castle all to themselves, but, alone as they were in the great house, the waiting time passed very pleasantly for both of them, and they were never lonely.

They had plenty of books and occupation, and on pleasant days they had Jerry harness one of the horses, and with a lunch, books and sunshades they would drive away, stopping wherever they fancied, now at one place, now another, and fastening the horse they would spread the robes out on the ground, and proceed to spend a long, pleasant day in the woods. Nelly knew nothing at all about the surrounding country, and Violet had been away from home so much that it was almost as new to her, so they came upon many delightful spots, and, for a wonder, did not get lost.

The waiting time was longer than they had anticipated, for it was August before the doctor

would let George undertake the long journey. But at last word came that they had started. Jerry brought the telegram to them one morning, and Violet hastily tore it open, while Nelly looked over her shoulder and read the few words it contained:

"Will be home Saturday on the 5:30 train."

Violet sprang up and danced about the room, waving the yellow paper over her head as though she was sixteen again, but Nelly stood quite still, a grateful happiness filling her heart that God had been so good to her.

The girls began their preparations at once. The house had to be decorated and a feast prepared to do honor to the occasion. They rose early Saturday morning, and while Violet went about opening blinds and drawing back curtains in rooms long unused, Nelly went into the garden and returned with apron and basket full of flowers. They decorated the front rooms and, with Jerry's help, festooned a garland over the front entrance.

At four o'clock Nelly asked for the flag, and, going up the narrow stairs to the cupola, fastened it to the rope, in the way George had showed her that November day, eight years ago; then pulled it up

to its place so that the travellers might see it floating out over the roof when they caught their first glimpse of the castle.

Jerry had started for the station, and, leaning her arms on the window-ledge, Nelly watched for the carriage to come out on the brow of the hill, from whence it took them fifteen minutes to reach home when coming from the station. Nelly could not help recalling the last time she had stood in that cupola looking out over the great stretch of beautiful country, when George had told her that Maud was jealous of her. She recalled with a smile the half-bashful, half-mischievous look with which the boy had made his confession, and wondered how she could for a moment have been angry or doubted him.

At last the empty carriage came out on the brow of the hill, and Nelly's heart throbbed joyfully at the thought that they would soon be there, and she would see George once more. How would he seem? she wondered. Would he be but the ghost of his former self, or had his strength returned so that he would seem like the George of old, before he had gone down to the mills that Saturday night?

Violet had insisted upon dressing up to do

honor to the occasion, so when Nelly went downstairs she found her arrayed in a trailing dress of pale pink crape, her hair gathered in a graceful knot on the top of her head, and ornamented with a silver hairpin. Nelly herself had put on a white dress, the most becoming thing, Violet assured her, she could wear, and the excitement had given a color to her cheeks the shade of the wild roses in her belt.

"They will be here soon. O Nelly!" and seizing her friend Violet gave her a little hug. "Is n't it splendid! I can hardly wait."

"Does n't it seem like six years, instead of six weeks since we came?" asked Nelly.

"I do n't know but it does," Violet replied.

"But I have been happy; have n't you, Nelly?"

"Yes, I have," she confessed, "happier than I have ever been before."

It seemed to the two impatient girls as though Jerry was gone much longer than usual. They could not keep still but walked up and down the long hall, running to the door every once in a while thinking they heard wheels, and laughing at each other at every false alarm. At last the carriage really appeared, driving slowly up the winding avenue,

"We must stand under the garland and receive them in state," said Violet excitedly.

But when the carriage stopped at the door Violet forgot all about the state and ceremony she had planned, and, running down the steps, threw both arms around her father, who was the first to step out of the carriage.

Nelly remained obediently under the garland, for a sudden fit of shyness seized her as she caught a glimpse of a pale, eager face looking out of the carriage; but when she saw her mother looking about in search of her, she, too, ran down the steps as eagerly as had Violet. They were all gathered around George, who was standing on his feet, very pale and thin, to be sure, but looking more like himself than they had dared hope ever to see him.

"How long is it since you left me, Nelly?" he asked, seizing both her hands—"six years?"

"No, only six weeks," she replied. "But, O George, how you have improved!"

"I intended to improve," he replied. "I was determined that Dr. Thornton should not keep me in Dedham any longer."

Nelly could not think of anything to say, and tried to slip away, but they would not let her.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Arlington kissed her as warmly as though she were their own daughter, and George would not let her out of his sight.

It was a very happy party that gathered round the table in the large dining-room, and, just as he had eight years ago, Mr. Arlington placed Nelly at his left hand, saying:

"This is your place; do you remember?"

She was no longer a bashful girl, but talking did not come any easier than it had eight years before, and she was too happy to eat.

Mrs. Jackson, as nurse, insisted that George should lie down on the sofa after dinner. After his long journey he must rest, so Mrs. Arlington sent Violet to the piano, and while the sweet summer twilight faded and the stars came out, she sang and played all the old favorites which they called for.

Sunday was a long, quiet, happy day. George seemed so much better than they had dared hope after his journey, that they all rejoiced. No one kept watch over him, so he was free to talk to Nelly as much as he wanted to, and now that he could stand on his feet and do it properly, he asked the question he had been longing to ask for

so long and got his answer. Every one knew how it was and left them to themselves.

"I have always loved Nelly," said Mrs. Arlington to Nelly's mother, "and nothing could give me more pleasure than to see her George's wife. He could not have a better or sweeter one."

"You must marry my mother too, George," said Nelly, soberly. "I am all she has and I cannot leave her."

"Do you think I would ask you to?" asked George reproachfully. "Why, Mother Jackson is as much my mother as yours. If it had not been for her I do n't know as I would ever have become worthy of you, Nelly."

"Let us go now and tell her," said Nelly eagerly.

Mrs. Jackson looked up with her own smile as they approached, for she was determined they should not know what it cost her to give Nelly up.

"Mother Jackson," said George frankly, " I want Nelly to be my wife. Can I have her?"

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Jackson, unable to quite control her voice, which would tremble a little in spite of her, "I gave her up to you long ago as soon as I knew you wanted her."

"But I am not satisfied," said George. "I want you too. You are always associated together in my mind. I want Nelly for my wife, and you for my mother."

"He is not satisfied with me, mamma," said Nelly, clasping her mother round the neck. "He wants you too."

Mrs. Jackson rather prided herself on her selfcontrol. She could endure a great deal and make no sign, but now her emotions were too much for her, and she could not keep back the tears.

"Why, mamma!" cried Nelly, clasping her tighter. "Did you think I would leave you?"

"Did you think I would ask her to?" asked George reproachfully. "Did n't you have a better opinion of your boy than that, Mother Jackson?"

"Listen, mamma," said Nelly, bending over her mother with flushed cheeks and shining eyes. "George is going to build a house in Dedham and we are to live there together, and there is so much for us to do, so much work waiting for us, we must have you to advise and help us."

"Forgive me," said Mrs. Jackson, smiling through her tears. "It was very foolish of me to cry. I do n't know how I came to. There is no one I would so willingly resign Nelly to as you, George, but you know she is all I have."

"I shall not take her away," replied George, "and you will have me besides; a son as well as a daughter."

"If I may be allowed to mention such a commonplace thing I will announce that dinner is ready," said Violet, putting her head in at the door, then vanishing to the dining-room, whither the others followed her.

George gained strength rapidly, and almost lived out-of-doors. When he was not walking or riding he lay in the hammock and Nelly read to him, or, more often, talked over their future plans.

The first ride they took was down to the quarry. Eight years ago neither of the young Arlingtons took an interest in their father's business, and, but for Mr. Arlington himself, Nelly would not have seen the granite works, but now George went down there every day, and he and his father had long business discussions to which Nelly was an interested listener.

When George brought his bride to Dedham

the two were warmly received, for George was still a hero there, and Nelly had always been a favorite.

Nelly and her mother became active in all kinds of good works, and, though they occupied the position of the first ladies in town, they did not forget the friends they had made the first year they were there. Miss Stone often spent a day at the big house, and was glad to retain their friendship, though a great deal of their dressmaking went to Nina Edwards. As for Nina she blessed the day Nelly came to Dedham, for after her marriage Nelly found ways and means to be the friend to the Edwards family she had longed to be when she first saw the pale dressmaker bending over her work.

George did not get richer out of his mills, but the men employed in them were prosperous, happy and respectable, and all were personally acquainted with the owner. Any one in distress was always sent to the Arlington mansion, one of the largest, handsomest residences in Dedham, and none deserving who went there for help, was ever turned away.

